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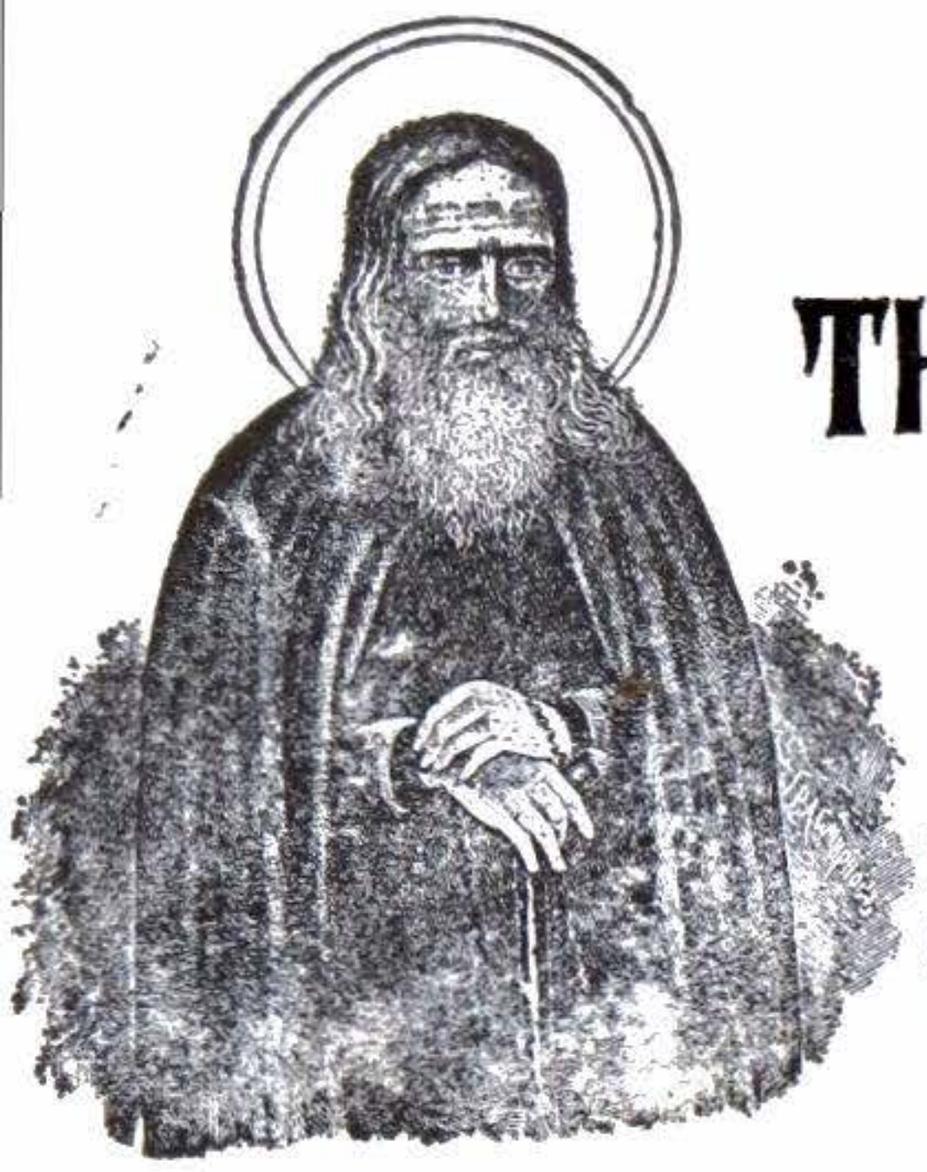

THE ORTHODOX WORD

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OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF
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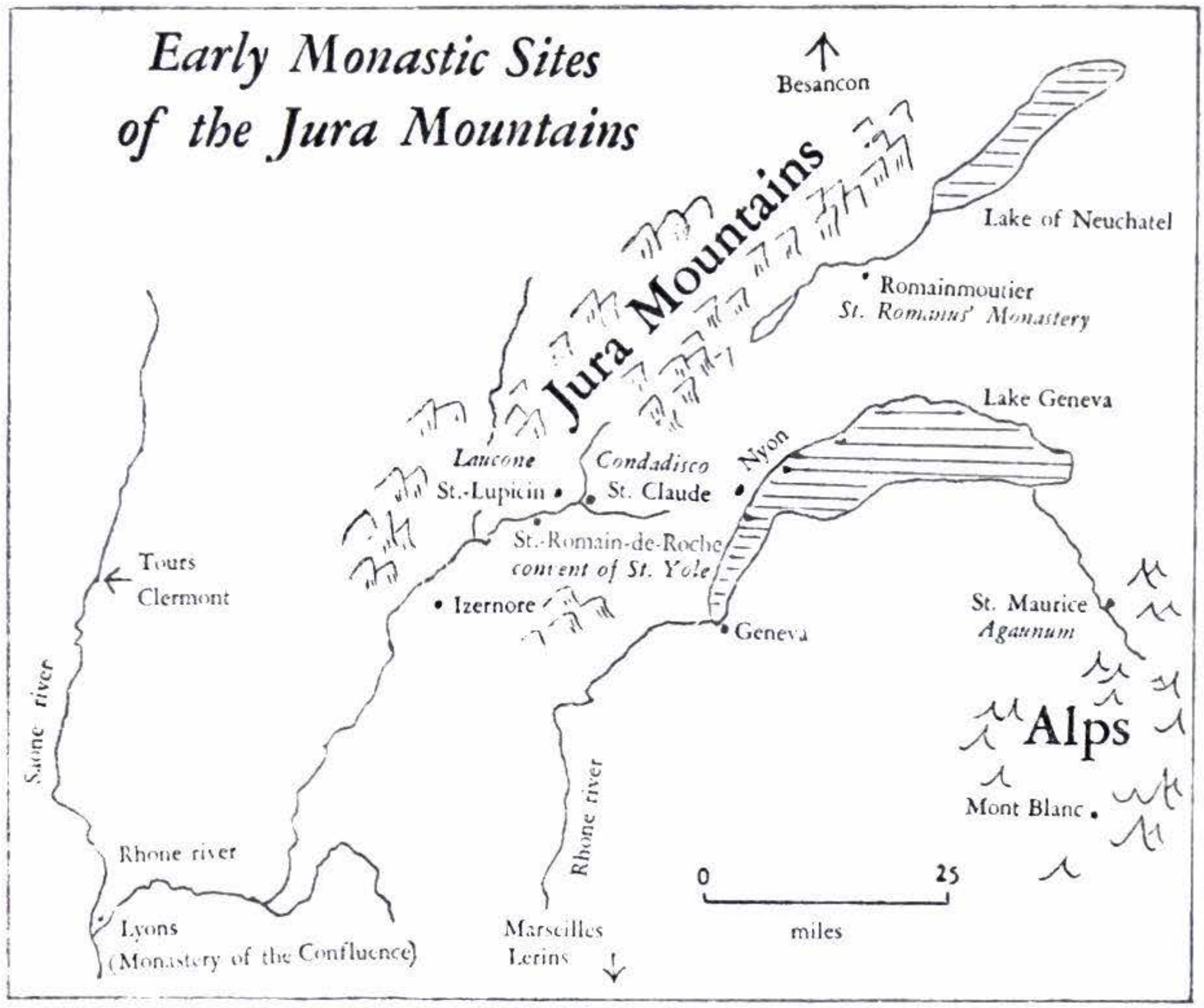
Saints Romanus and Lupicinus

THE DESERT DWELLERS OF THE JURA

FOURTH-CENTURY GAUL had St. Martin with his ascetic prodigies and his communities of anchorites; the turn of the new century saw the foundation of the island monastery of Lerins, which brought the tradition of the Egyptian Fathers to Gaul and produced a number of bishops and monastic founders; the first decades of the 5th century saw the establishment of numerous monastic communities in the south of Gaul, usually near cities and often founded by bishops, and the spread of the Eastern monastic rule and teaching through the writings of St. Cassian. By the end of St. Cassian's life (434), Orthodox monasticism was thus already well-established in Gaul.

Then occurred a phenomenon which is familiar to us from the later history of the "Northern Thebaid" of Russia from the 14th to the 17th centuries: the flight of monks and monastic aspirants not only from cities and other inhabited centers, but even from established monasteries, into the absolute isolation of the forested wilderness of Gaul. Doubtless such books at St. Eucherius' *Praise of the Desert* had an influence on this movement; but the main impulse was the same one that had produced the original flight to the Egyptian desert a century earlier: the elementary Christian impulse to give up everything for God, to abandon all things and influences of this world in order the better to prepare oneself for the Kingdom of Heaven.

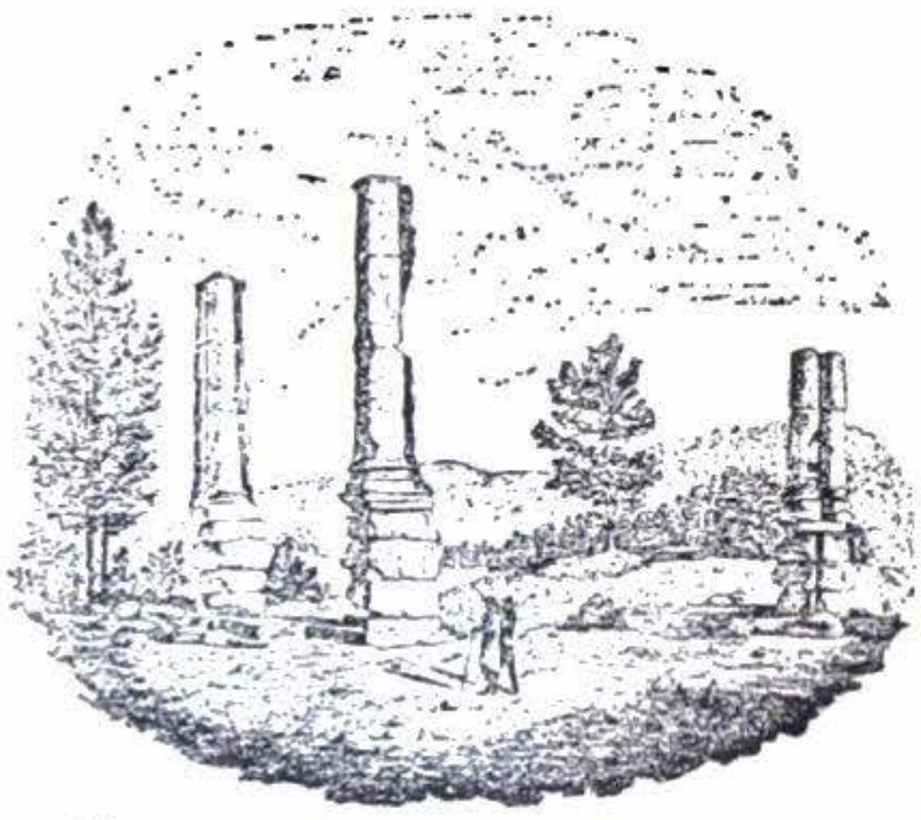


Among the first of such desert-dwellers who literally turned the "deserts" of Gaul into cities populated with armies of monks, were Sts. Romanus and Lupicinus. It is not by accident that St. Gregory begins his *Life of the Fathers* with them; for already before his time their exploits had become legendary in Gaul, and they were taken as the purest examples of the monastic desert life. Their Lives, together with the Life of their disciple St. Eugendus, were written by an anonymous disciple of the latter about the year 520. This document, the *Life of the Jura Fathers (Vita Patrum Jurensium)*, gives not only a much more detailed account of the Lives of Sts. Romanus and Lupicinus than does St. Gregory, but also furnishes invaluable information on the monastic teaching of these Fathers, on the monastic life in general in 5th-century Gaul, and on the everyday life and the growth of the Jura monasteries during the first 75 years or so of their existence. The following pages are a summary of the parts of this document which best illustrate these points, with citations from it according to chapter, as a supplement to chapter one of the *Life of the Fathers. (Francois Martine, Vie des*

Peres du Jura, Paris, 1968, Latin and French text with copious notes; other information, and almost all illustrations, are taken from the thorough historical work of Paul Benoit: *Histoire de l'Abbaye et de la Terre de Saint-Claude,* Montreuil-sur-Mer, 1890, 2 vols.)

THE JURA is a mountain range in the eastern part of France, near the Swiss border, some hundred miles long and twenty or thirty wide. While not as spectacular as the Alps, which are visible in spots to the east, these mountains have a rugged beauty of their own. They proceed from west to east in three "steps," each about 1000 feet higher than the one below, from the plains to the "high Jura," which is a mountainous plateau of peaks and gorges, with elevations up to 5500 feet. Even today the mountains are covered with fir forests, with numerous waterfalls, lakes and treacherous streams. The towns which now occupy the sites of the original monastic settlements are tourist centers for such activities as fishing and camping in summer, and skiing in winter, when the mountains are covered with deep snows.

In early Roman times the lower parts of the Jura had inhabited towns, but the "high Jura" — which Julius Caesar described as *Jura mons altissimus* — was totally uninhabited. With the wane of Roman power and the incursions of barbarians, the population of this area declined, and the forests quickly overgrew much of the land that had been taken from them by the advancing Roman civilization. By the 5th century, when the wild Burgundians and Franks roamed this part of Gaul, only a few of the old towns were left; they were largely Christian, and the old pagan temples here were already in ruins.



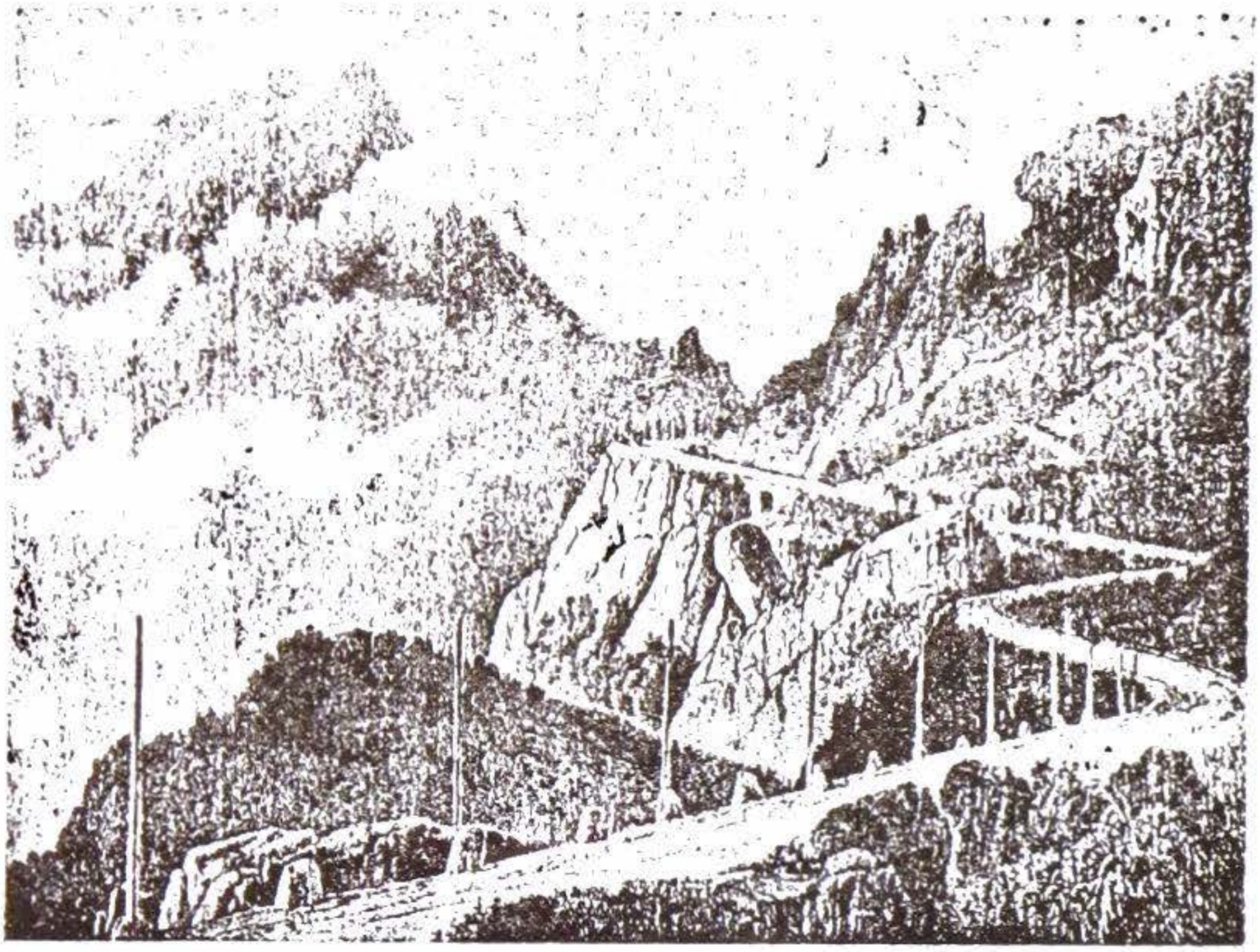
Ruins of the pagan temple at Izernore, birthplace of the Jura saints

It was near one of these towns that all three of the Jura Fathers were born. St. Eugendus, as the *Life* states (ch. 119) was born not far from Izernore, site of an important pagan temple dedicated to the god Mercury, which had been partially destroyed (its ruins may still be seen today); and he was a "fellow-

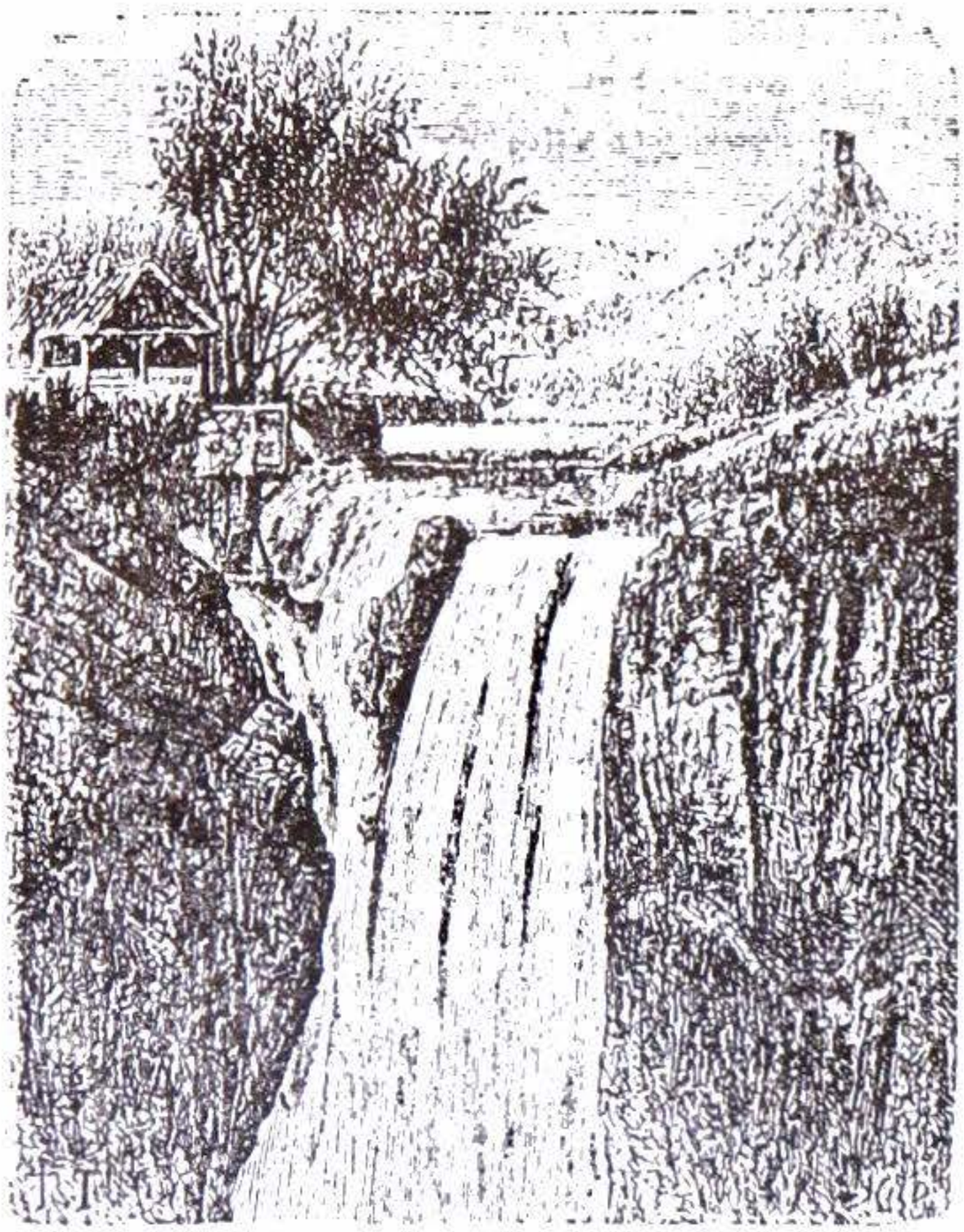
citizen" of St. Romanus and Lupicinus, who were thus born either here or in a nearby village.

St. Romanus was the elder brother of St. Lupicinus and was the first to go into the wilderness (St. Gregory's account is much more general and omits details like this). He was born probably in the last decade of the 4th century, the decade of the death of St. Martin. "Before him in this province no kind of monk had devoted himself either to the solitary life or the life in common" (ch. 5). Concerning his monastic preparation the *Life* devotes only one sentence: "Before embracing the religious life, he had known the venerable Sabinus, Abba of the (Monastery of the) Confluence of Lyons, as well as his strenuous rule and the life of his monks; then, like a bee in search of booty, after having gathered from each of them the flowers of their perfections, he returned to where he came from" (ch. 11). Nothing more is known of this Abba Sabinus, nor is it known of which of the several island monasteries of Lyons (which is situated at the "confluence" of the Saone and Rhone rivers) he was Abba. It is known, however, that Lyons, some 200 miles inland from Marseilles, was already a monastic center early in the 5th century; a disciple of St. Martin of Tours, St. Maximus (whose brief Life is given by St. Gregory in his *Glory of the Confessors,* ch. 22), was for a time in one of the island monasteries; and St. Eucherius, author of the *Praise of the Desert,* became bishop of Lyons in about 434 and was known to spend the time of Lent in one of these monasteries in prayer, fasting, and the writing of books. Judging from the information given in the Life, St. Romanus could have been in Lyons during the episcopacy of St. Eucherius, although it is more likely that he was there a few years before it; in any case, he could have read the *Praise of the Desert,* which was written in about 428, before leaving himself for the wilderness. His reason for going to Lyons was probably a simple one: most likely it had the nearest monastery to his home, being no more than a hundred miles from the Jura mountains and being connected with them by the river Rhone and its tributaries.

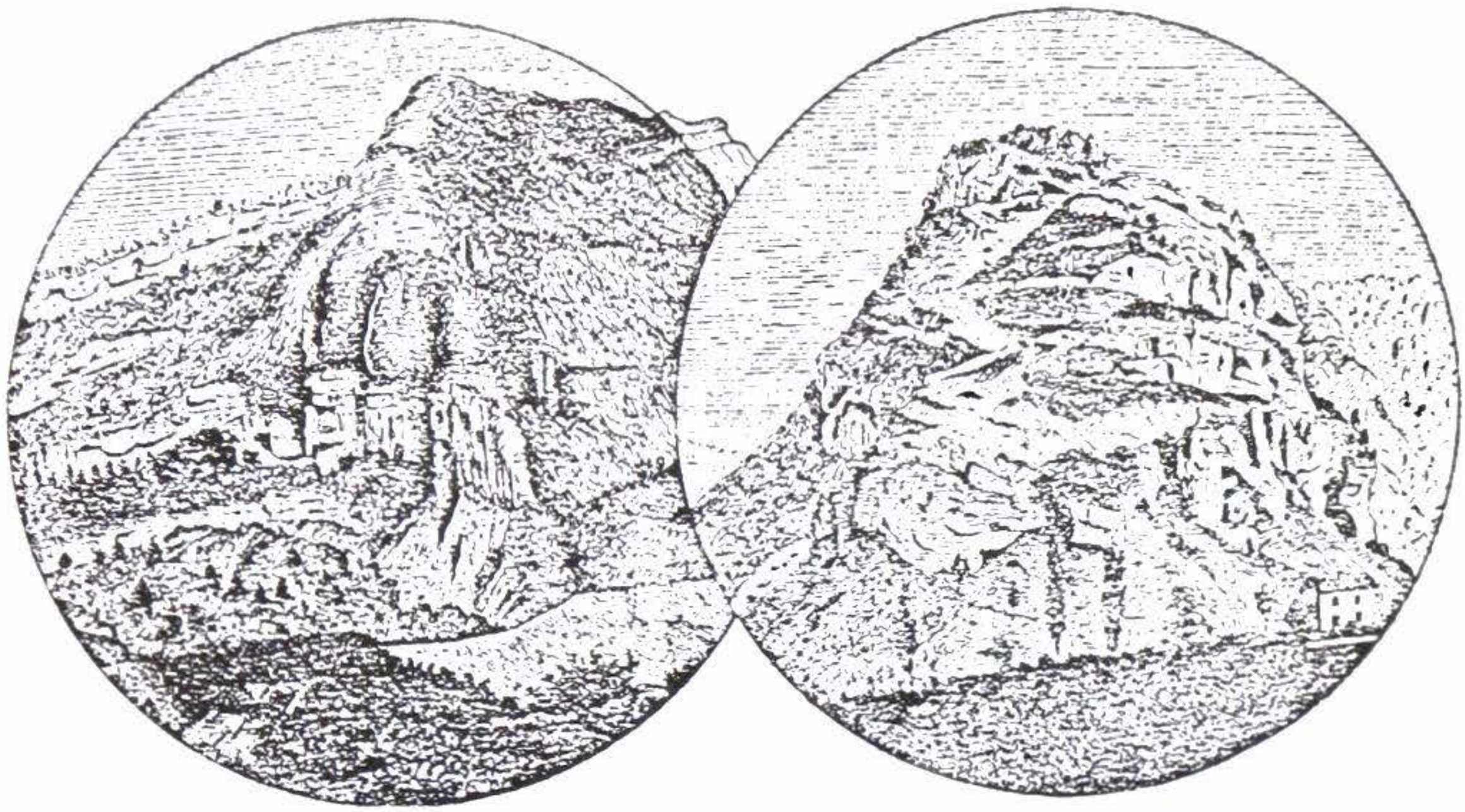
It is not stated that St. Romanus became a monk in this monastery, only that he received his knowledge of monasticism there. And then, " from this monastery, without manifesting anything of his most holy aspirations, he took the book of the Life of the Holy Fathers and the remarkable institutes of the Abbas" (ch. 11). The first book was undoubtedly one of the then-circulating Latin accounts of the Egyptian Fathers; the second book was certainly St. Cassian's *Institutes.* With these, and his exposure to monasticism in practice under the Abba Sabinus, he had all the theoretical basis he needed for the monastic life.



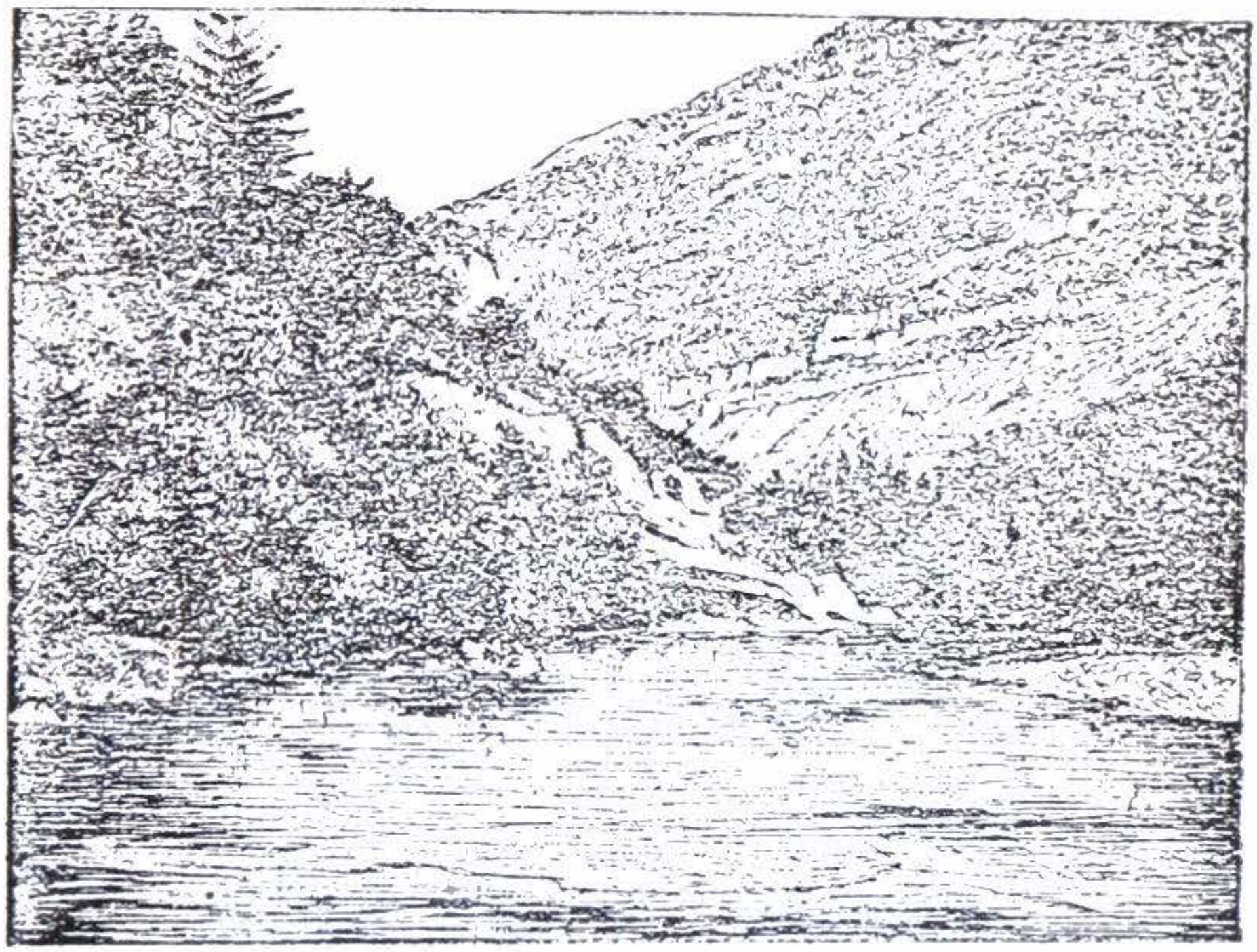
The way into the Jura



Cascade des Planches — a waterfall of the Jura



Le Bayard and Le Chabaud — the two striking cliffs above Condadisco



The river Bienne just below Condadisco

He set out, not for any distant place, but for the wilderness close to his own home. What did he hope to achieve by this? Why did he not stay in an established monastic community, or seek out one with more renowned elders, such as Lerins? Everything in the Life of St. Romanus seems to indicate that he had no religious "romanticism" whatever: he did not dream of far-away lands, "ideal monasteries," or "holy elders." He thought of only one thing: how, on the solid foundation of the ABC's of spiritual life and strict monastic practice, to save his soul and prepare for the heavenly kingdom. His simple Christian upbringing had prepared him for this: "He was not particularly educated, but, a rarer merit, he was endowed with purity, with an unequalled loving kindness, to such a degree that one does not see him in childhood giving himself over to childish pranks, nor in mature years becoming enslaved to human passions and to the bonds of marriage" (ch. 5). This simple village boy from the mountain provinces, once his heart had been inflamed in mature years with the ideal of Christian perfection and he had learned the basic principles of monastic life, had no thought but to go and practice what he had learned in the nearest suitable place. And so it was that, "in about his 35th year, attracted by the solitudes of the desert, after having left his mother, his sister and his brother, he penetrated into the forests of the Jura near to his home" (ch. 5). In fact, the place where he finally settled is about 20 miles as the crow flies from his native town of Izernore — close enough to be found out later by venturesome spirits like himself, but far enough away to be quite remote from and inaccessible to the world.

"Going about in all directions through these forests, which were suitable and favorable for his way of life, he ended by finding, farther on, amidst valleys bordered by cliffs, an exposed place suitable for tilling. There, the abrupt sides of three mountains turn aside a little the one from the other, leaving between them a flat place of some extent. Since the beds of two courses of water come together in this place, the site which thus constituted a unique river-bank was soon popularly called Condadisco" (ch. 6). Condadisco ("Condat" in French, derived from a Celtic word meaning "confluence") is the present town of St.-Claude (named after a 7th-century abbot-bishop of the monastery), located at the confluence of the Bienne and Tacon rivers (tributaries of the Rhone); it lasted as a monastic community until the 18th century.

"The new lodger, seeking a dwelling corresponding to his ardent desire, found on the eastern side, at the foot of a rocky mountain, a most densely-growing fir which, arranging its boughs in a circle, covered the disciple of Paul as before the palm had covered Paul himself" (ch. 7). In recalling the palm which,

in Blessed Jerome's *Life of Paul the First Hermit* (ch. 5), was the dwelling place of the first monk of Egypt, and in calling St. Romanus the "disciple of Paul," the author of the *Life of the Jura Fathers* shows the Eastern roots of the desert-dwellers of Gaul; and the forest fir, as opposed to the desert palm, reveals the different Western locale of the same monastic struggle. The "rocky mountain" in the one presently known as "Le Bayard," which towers over the town of St.-Claude.

"Thus the fir furnished him, against the heat of mid-summer and the coldness of rains, a roof continually green. . . In addition, there were several wild bushes that provided their berries, sour for pleasure-lovers, no doubt, but sweet for those whose senses are at peace. . . If anyone should decide, with an audacious boldness, to cut across these trackless solitudes, not to mention the density of the forest and its heaps of fallen trees, the very high ridges where deer lived and the steep ravines of the bucks would scarcely permit such a man, even if robust and agile, to make the journey" (chs. 8, 9).

In this wild and inaccessible place St. Romanus settled down for the monastic life of struggle, determined never to leave. Being practical and not a "dreamer," he did not hope to gain his daily food entirely from what the forest could provide, but brought with him the minimum necessary for a small garden. "Having brought seeds and a pickax, the blessed one began in this place, while devoting himself assiduously to prayer and reading, to satisfy the needs of a modest existence by manual labor, according to the monastic institution. He was in great abundance, for he had need of nothing; he gave enough, for he had nothing to put away for the poor; he did not set foot beyond his retreat; he returned no more to his home; as a true hermit, he labored so as to provide his own living" (ch. 10).

What a lesson, and what a wealth of inspiration for the monastic aspirants of the 20th century! With modern means of communication, the very idea of *losing oneself from the eyes of the world* has been all but forgotten, and to live in one place for one's whole life is almost unheard of. Later St. Romanus did travel, on monastery business, throughout the Jura Mountains and as far as Geneva and beyond (journeys of no more than a hundred miles); but his disciple, St. Eugendus, provided a perfect example of monastic stability: from the time when he came to Condadisco at the age of seven, to his death more than fifty years later, he never once left the monastery (ch. 126). If we are helpless to imitate such stability today, let us at least understand its importance: Christianity in practice, and monasticism above all, is a matter of *staying in one place and*

struggling with all one's heart for the Kingdom of Heaven. One may be called to do the work of God elsewhere, or may be moved about by unavoidable circumstances; but without the basic and profound desire to endure everything for God in one place without running away, one will scarcely be able to put down the roots required in order to bring forth spiritual fruits. Unfortunately, with the ease of modern communications one may even sit in one spot and *still* concern oneself with everything but the one thing needful — with everyone else's business, with all the church gossip, and not with the concentrated labor needed to save one's own soul in this evil world.

In a famous passage of the *Institutes,* St. Cassian warns the monks of his time to "flee women and bishops, for neither the one nor the other will allow one any more to have repose in one's cell, or to be occupied with the thought of God, to behold holy objects with pure eyes" (XI, 17). Women, of course, tempt by means of the flesh, and bishops by means of ordination to the priesthood and in general by the vainglory of acquaintance with those in high positions. Today this warning remains timely, but for the monks of the 20th century one can add a further warning: Flee from telephones, travelling, and gossip — those forms of communication which most of all bind one to the world — for they will cool your ardor and make you, even in your monastic cell, the plaything of worldly desires and influences!

"In this place, the imitator of Anthony the ancient hermit took delight for a long time in an angelic life and, apart from heavenly vision, enjoyed the sight of nothing but wild beasts and, rarely, hunters. But then his venerable brother Lupicinus, younger than he by birth but soon his equal in sanctity, informed at night by his brother in a dream, abandoned for the love of Christ those whom the blessed Romanus had already abandoned, his sister and mother, and with warm desire reached the dwelling of his brother and adopted his way of life. . . In this humble nest, in this remote corner of the desert, these two conceived, by inspiration of the Divine Word, a spiritual posterity and distributed a little on all sides, to the monasteries and churches of Christ, the fruit of their chaste childbearing" (ch. 12). Thus, with the arrival of the second brother, a community was formed, and the news of this began to attract others. The first to join them were two young clerics (probably from the lower orders, Readers or Sub-deacons) from Nyon (near Geneva), and already the "cradle of the saints," the fir tree, was found to be too small for their life and prayer, and the first buildings had to be erected. "They established themselves not far from the tree, on a sort of small hill with a gentle slope where now is to be found, as a remembrance, the oratory reserved for monastic prayer; after having hewn with an

axe and polished with the greatest care some pieces of wood, they constructed huts for themselves and prepared others for those who would come" (ch. 13). The site of this oratory is now occupied by the 14th-century cathedral in the town of St.-Claude.

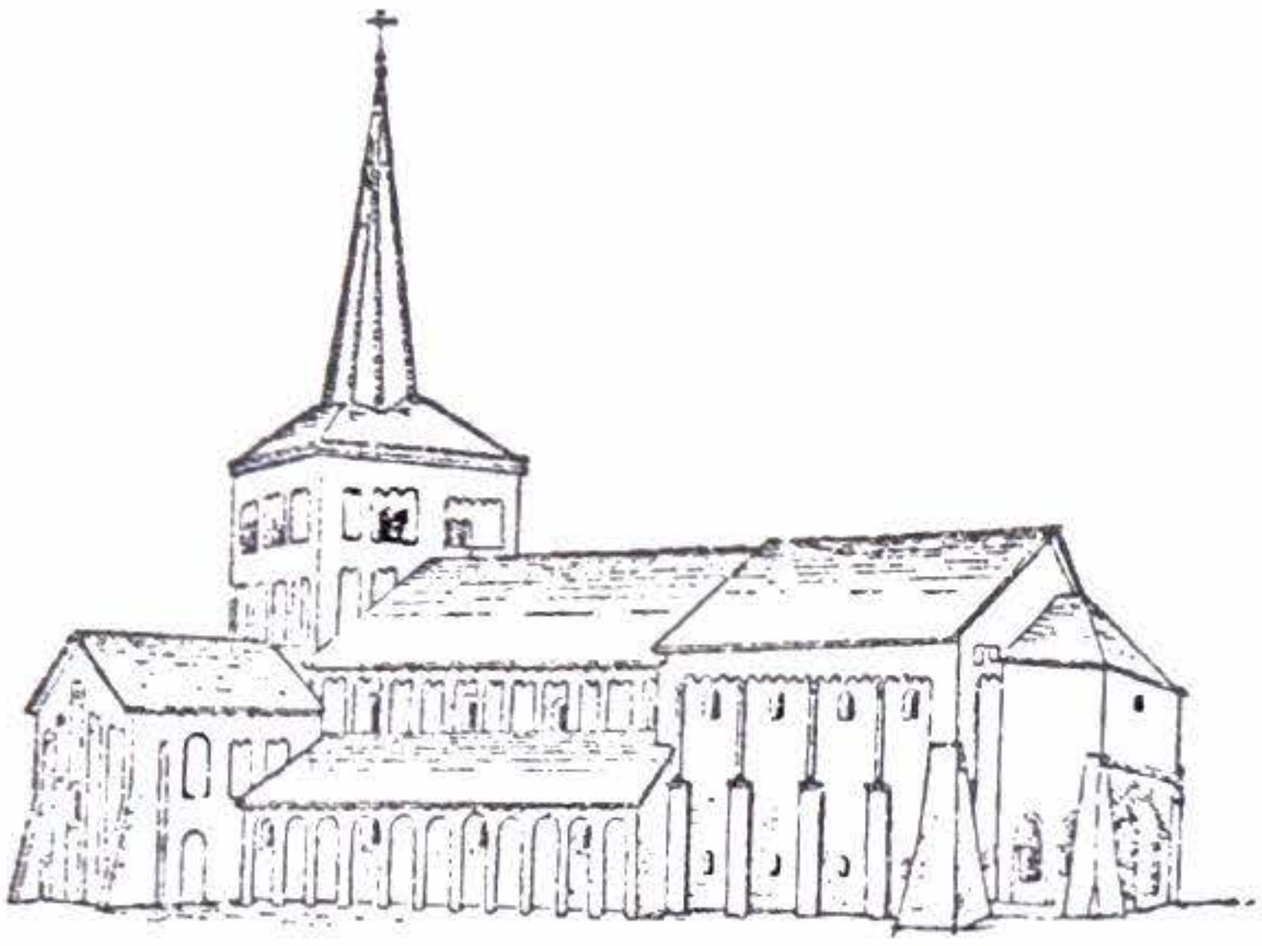
From this time on the community began to grow rapidly, and people from the world also began to come on pilgrimage. "Crowds of believers fled the world in order to follow, for the Lord, the vocation of renunciation and perfection. Some came there to behold the marvels of the new institution and to report, when they returned home, the good gift of its example. Others brought there people tormented with demons so that the prayer of the saints, joined to their own faith, might heal them; the insane and paralytics were also brought. Most of these sick ones, after recovering their health, returned home; but others remained in the monastery. . . Issued from the two founders, the holy community . . . developed in the unity of faith and love . . . Not only the remote regions of the province of Sequanie (the Jura region), but many distant lands also, were filled by the holy propagation of this divine race, with monasteries and churches" (chs. 14-16). We know of one of the pilgrims to the Jura from the letters of the celebrated bishop of Clermont (the birthplace of St. Gregory of Tours), Sidonius Apollinaris. Writing to a certain Domnulus in about the year 470, he indicates in a passing reference the renown which the Jura monasteries then enjoyed in Gaul: "And now, unless the monasteries of the Jura keep you, where you love to ascend as if in foretaste of a celestial habitation, this letter ought to reach you. . ." (O.M. Dalton, *The Letters of Sidonius,* Oxford, 1915, Book IV, 25).

IN THE YEAR 444 (the only precise date in the *Life of the Jura Fathers),* St. Hilary of Arles (himself a disciple of St. Honoratus of Lerins) travelled to Besancon at the edge of the Jura in connection with the famous dispute mentioned earlier in this Introduction (the author of the *Life* takes the side of Pope St. Leo in this dispute). Having heard of the renown of Sts. Romanus and Lupicinus, "he summoned the blessed Romanus, not far from the town of Besancon, through clerics sent for this purpose. Exalting, in a magnificent eulogy, his initiative and his way of life, he conferred on him the honor of the priesthood and let him return, heaped with honor, to the monastery" (ch. 18). This was perhaps some fifteen years from the time of St. Romanus' undertaking of the hermitic life, when he must have been about fifty years old. Roman Catholic scholars generally assume that there must have been already a number of priests in the

flourishing community, having in mind the later Latin practice. But we must remember that the monastic inspiration of the Jura Fathers comes from the East, where there were many monasteries without any priests at all; the celebrated monastery of St. Sabbas the Sanctified, for example, had over 150 monks before having a single priest, and St. Sabbas himself, a younger contemporary of St. Romanus, is called the "Sanctified" or "Consecrated" because, possessing the priestly rank, he was a notable *exception* among the ranks of monks and even abbots. (Like St. Romanus, he was about 50 when his bishop compelled him to receive ordination as the first priest in his community.) Some forty years later, St. Eugendus, even after becoming abbot, was stubbornly to resist being raised to the priesthood: "Often he would tell me in confidence that it was much better for an abbot, because of the ambition of the young, to direct the brothers without being clothed in the priesthood, without being bound by this dignity which should not be sought by men vowed to renunciation and withdrawal. 'Besides,' he added, 'we know also that many fathers, after having practiced to perfection the humility of their state, have been deeply and secretly filled with pride by the priestly ministry. . .' (chs. 133, 134). St. Lupicinus never received the priesthood, even after the death of St. Romanus, when he was abbot over the brethren for some twenty years. It is more than likely, then, that St. Romanus, in full accord with Eastern tradition, was the first priest of the community, and that before his ordination the Liturgy would be served in the oratory (chapel) only on the fairly rare occasions when a parish priest would visit. St. Eugendus himself was the son of perhaps the nearest parish priest during the lifetime of St. Romanus, at Izernore (ch. 120). (Priests in the world in the West at this time, it should be noted, could be married, while bishops were required, if married when elected, to cease living with their wives after ordination.)

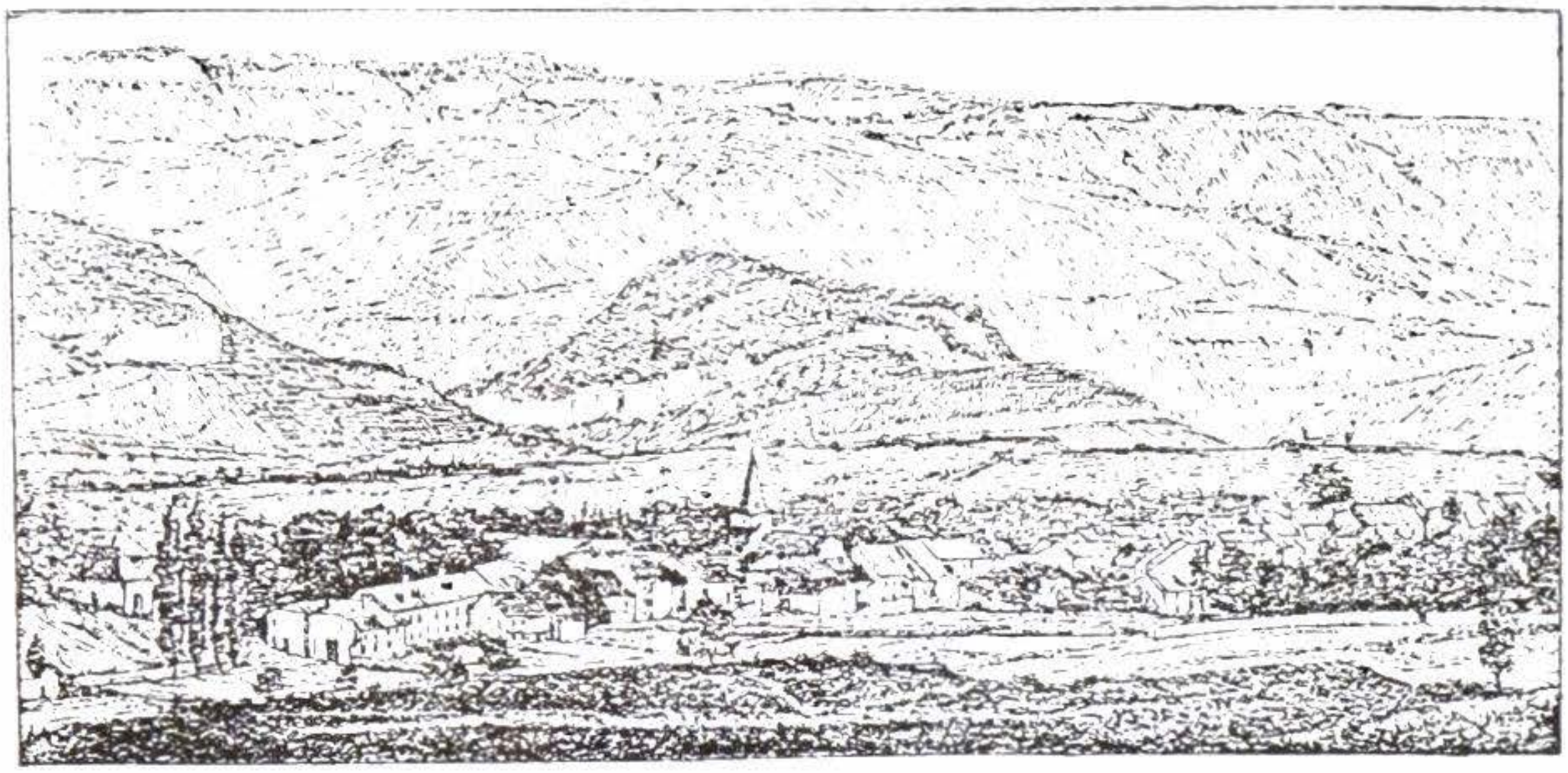
"St. Romanus, then, clothed with the priesthood, returned to the monastery; but remembering his original profession, he attached so little importance, in his monastic humility, to the prestige of the clerical office that although at the time of the solemnities the brothers would be able to require him properly to occupy a higher place than they for the sacrifice, on the other days, monk among monks, he would not allow to appear on his person any sign of the eminent dignity of the priesthood" (ch. 20). This passage also would seem to indicate that the Liturgy, in the tradition of the Eastern lavras, was not celebrated every day at Condadisco, but only (perhaps) on Sundays and feast days.

With the increase of the brethren, several new monasteries were founded, all of them jointly under the direction of the two brothers. "The site of the

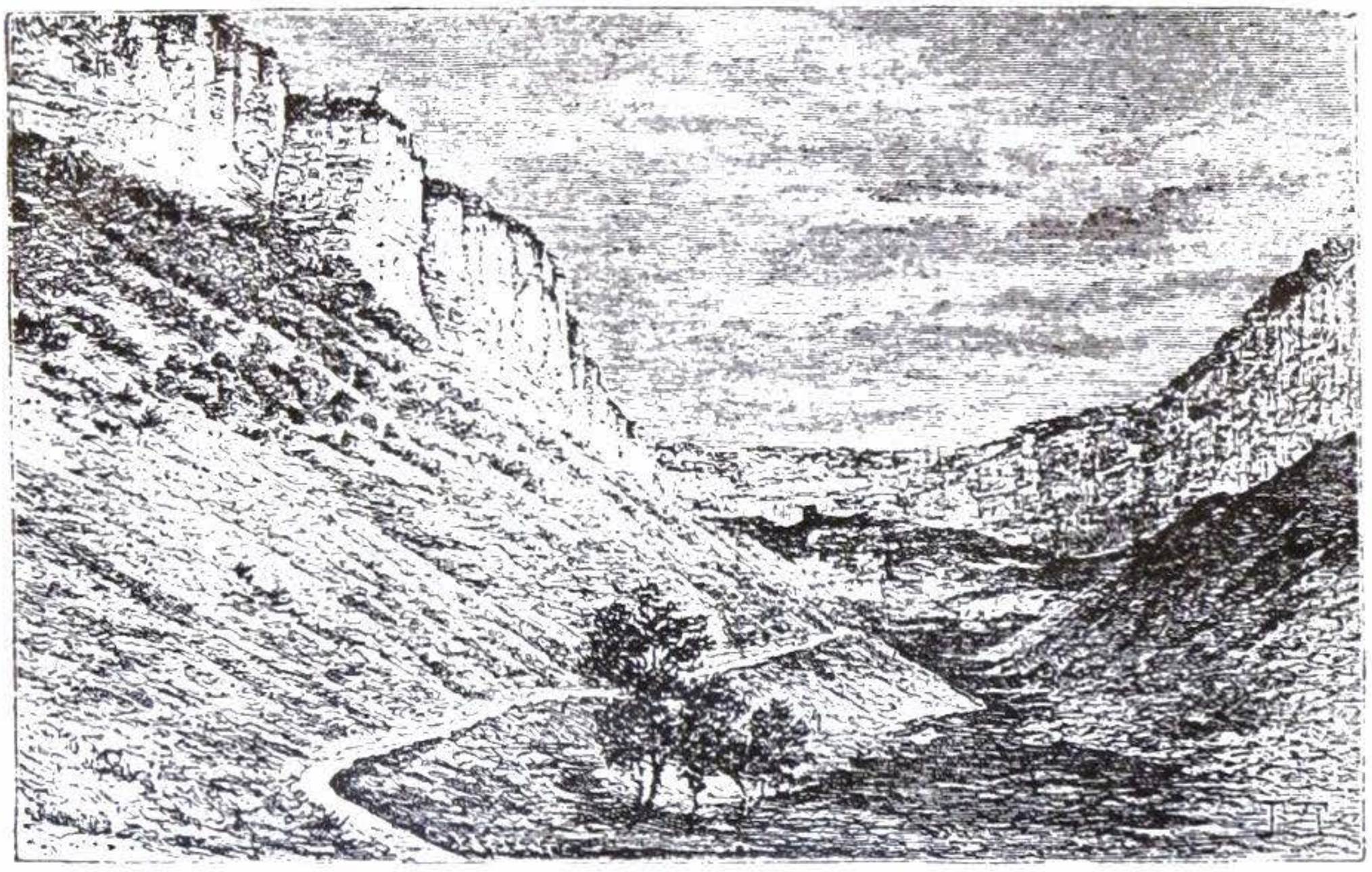


The church at Romainmoutier — St. Romanus' monastery

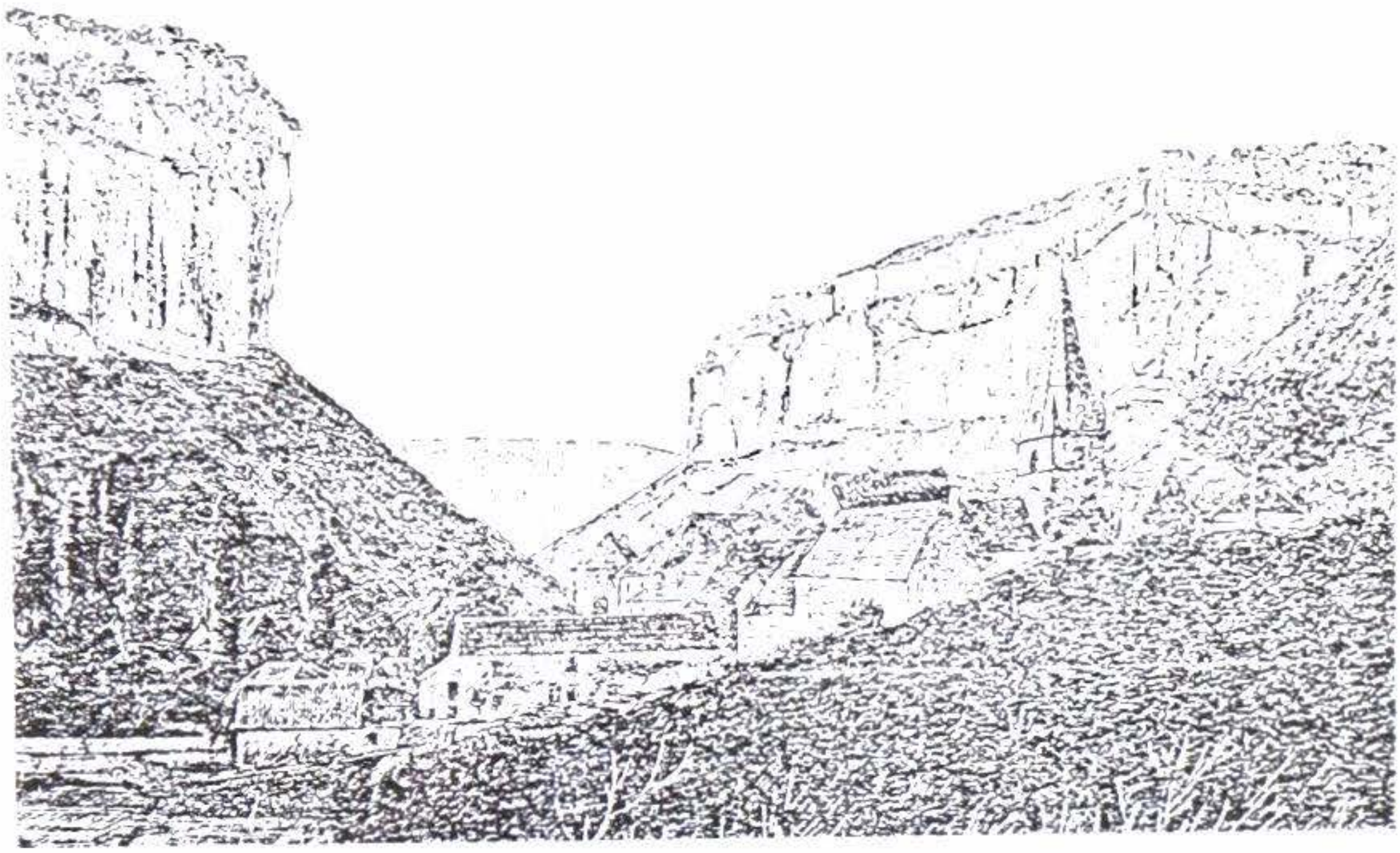
community of Condadisco from this time on had difficulty in providing support, not only for the crowds who came there, but even for the brothers. Hanging on hills or leaning against slopes, in the midst of rocky projections and humps, ruined by frequent coursings of water over a stony soil, agriculture is limited and difficult, as much by the scantiness of the fields as by the poorness of the harvests and the uncertain yield. If, in fact, the rigors of the winter not merely cover but rather bury the countryside under snows, in spring, on the other hand, and in summer and autumn, either the soil, overheated by the reflection of the heat off the nearby cliffs, is on fire, or else the overwhelming rains carry off in torrents not only the land made ready for agriculture, but often also the uncultivatable and hard terrain itself, together with the grass, the trees and shrubs . . . Thus, in their desire to avoid this scourge to a certain extent, the most holy Fathers, in the neighboring forests, which were not at all deprived of places with less slope and more fertile, cut down firs, uprooted stumps. . . and made fields, so that this land, suitable for agriculure, might lessen the poverty of the inhabitants of Condadisco. Each of the two monasteries was submitted to the authority of the two Abbas. However, Father Lupicinus lived more especially and more usually at Laucone — the name which this place bears — and at the death of blessed Romanus there were left not less than 150 brothers, whom he had formed following his own discipline" (chs. 22-24). This, the second monastery of the Jura, several miles west of Condadisco, where the same river Bienne emerges from a deep gorge into a fertile plain, is the present-day village of St.-Lupicin, where the relics of St. Lupicinus are still to be found. St. Gregory, in his Life of the two saints, mentions another monastery founded by the brothers "in the territory of Alamannia"; this is usually interpreted as the monastery of Romainmoutier (in Latin, *Romani monasterium,* "Romanus' monastery") in



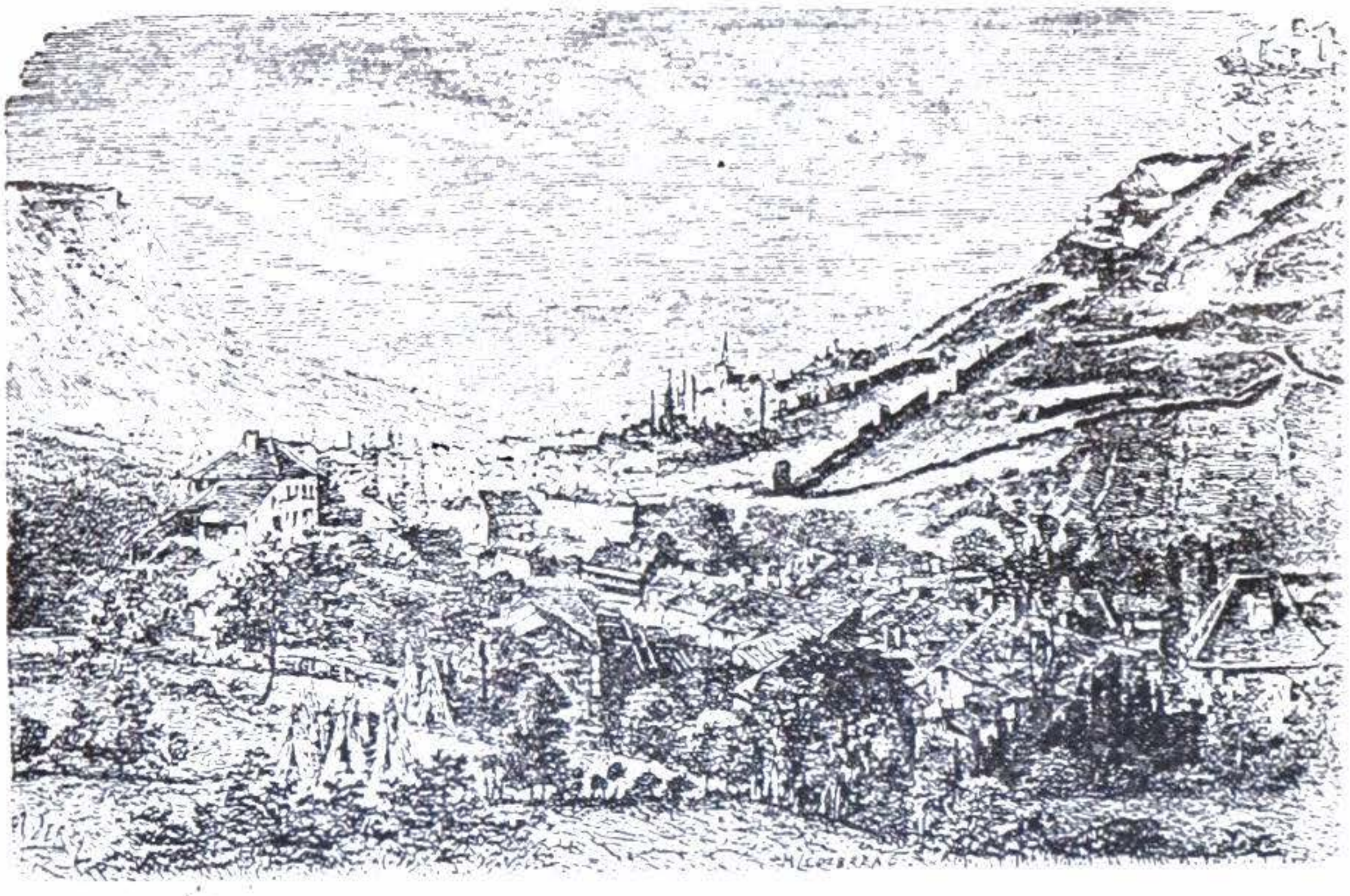
The town of St.-Lupicin — site of the monastery of Laucone



La Balme -- the cliffs on which St. Yole's convent was built



The cliffs of St. Yole's convent — showing the later monastery



Salins — the salt-producing town of the Jura where the monks often travelled

Switzerland some 45 miles northeast of the original monastery. In addition to these main monasteries, there were numerous cells and hermitages scattered throughout the mountains, making of the Jura a kind of "Thebaid of the Gauls" (or a Mount Athos), even though the population of monks never reached Egyptian proportions, being numbered in hundreds rather than thousands.

In the midst of all this fresh monastic activity, women too began to be attracted by the desert and by the example of the brother-saints; the first to come was the saints' sister, Yole. As Sts. Anthony and Pachomius for their sisters (and later St. Caesarius of Arles for his sister Caesaria), so now the monastic founders of the Jura had to establish a monastic community for their sister and the women who followed her into the wilderness. "Not far from there, on a high cliff, dominated by a natural rock and bounded by a stone arch which concealed vast caverns within, the saints, according to tradition, established — being guided in their choice by parental affection — a Mother for a community of virgins, and assumed in this place the governance of 105 nuns. . . Here the blessed Fathers constructed a basilica, which not only received the mortal remains of the virgins, but had the honor also to contain the tomb of the hero of Christ, Romanus himself. So great was the strictness of the observances of this monastery that every virgin who entered there for renunciation was never again seen outside, unless it be when she was carried to her tomb" (chs. 25-26). This convent, known as "La Balme", is not heard of later, and evidently it disappeared amid the barbarian raids of the 5th and 6th centuries. It was perhaps the first western community for women in the "desert," earlier convents having been established in or near cities. Later a community of monks was established nearby, and presently the site (about three miles southwest of St.-Lupicin, also on the river Bienne) is near the town of St.-Romain-de-Roche, where the relics of St. Romanus are indeed still kept in the parish church. In later centuries there was another community of nuns in the Jura, at Neauville-les-Dames, which was dependent on Condadisco; perhaps it was a successor to St. Yole's convent.

The rest of the Life of St. Romanus — the first of the three parts of the *Life of the Jura Fathers* — is devoted to the Saint's miracles, to the devil's attacks against the brethren, and to the weaknesses and murmuring of some of the brethren, once they came to accept the marvellous monasteries of the Jura as part of the church "establishment" and therefore something to be taken for granted. All of this is described in terms very familiar to readers of the Lives of the Eastern Fathers, and some of it is related by St. Gregory of Tours in his Life of the brothers, although it is evident, because of many differences, that he did not have this *Life* as his chief source, if indeed he knew it at all.

In one passage of the *Life of the Jura Fathers,* when one of the elder monks is described as complaining to St. Romanus that he is admitting too many aspirants into the community and not making a careful selection of them, the author takes the opportunity, in giving St. Romanus' reply, of describing something of the monastic spirit which St. Romanus imparted to the brethren, and also something of the monastic trials the brothers underwent. St. Romanus replies to the elder: "Tell me, O you who desire for us so small a community: are you capable, among all the brothers whom you see about you in our community, of making the sorting and the division in order to form the two groups of which you speak, as if, in examining one after the other, you could separate perfectly, before their death, the tested saints from the careless ones?. . . Have you not seen here in our community some monks devote themselves with fervor to a rule of life which, later on, after a slow decline from lukewarmness to lukewarmness, they trampled underfoot? How many times, also, brothers have left the community under the blow of a contrary impluse! And among these latter, how many times have we seen one or the other abandon the world again and return to us, once, twice, three times, and in spite of that, finding his courage again, persevere unto the palm of victory in the profession which he had abandoned so long before! Some, also, without incurring reproach, return, not to their vices, but to their land of origin and observe there our rule with such love and zeal that, being raised to the priesthood by the love and the election of the faithful, they direct with great dignity monasteries and churches of Christ. . . And did you not see, quite recently, in our own monastery, what happened to Maxentius? After having imposed on himself an asceticism and privations unheard of in Gaul, with continual vigils after having shown an untiring diligence in reading, — persuaded by the vice of pride, he became the prey of the most impure of the demons, and his folly and rage surpassed by far that of those he had only lately taken care of, when he had been mighty in the fruit of his merits: bound with straps and ropes by those whom he had long before healed by the virtue of the Lord, he was finally delivered from the deadly spirit by anointment with holy oil. Therefore, acknowledge that it is the same pride, inspired by the devil, that secretly instigates you, and that your case is not very different from that of Maxentius" (chs. 29, 32-34).

The *Life of the Jura Fathers* — like St. Gregory's Life — shows the two brothers as different but complementary in their virtues: "The two Fathers surpassed each other in complementary qualities which are indispensable in the

(*Continued on page 134.*)

A Pilgrimage to the Jura Mountains

The following account is that of an American soldier, a convert to Orthodoxy, stationed in Germany.

ON THE FEAST DAY of the Prophet Elias, July 20/August 2, 1976, I began my pilgrimage to the Orthodox holy places of Eastern France and Switzerland. It began in Wiesbaden at the church of the Righteous Elizabeth. I had come to Wiesbaden for the weekend, as I often do. On this day Father Mark celebrated the Vigil and Divine Liturgy for the holy Prophet, and then read a prayer for me for the beginning of my journey. From Wiesbaden I went to the nearby U.S. Air Force base at Frankfort, where I rented a car. I wasn't too pleased at the prospect of traveling alone, but, asking for God's blessing, I started off by myself.

The next morning I began the first leg of my journey. Traveling in Germany is very convenient since there are many spots along the way where one can rest and eat. Once into the Swiss countryside, the terrain begins to climb, and the scenery becomes more picturesque. After passing through Bern, the freeway (autobahn) ended, and a pleasant drive began on small country roads through the Swiss countryside. There are lots of farm villages, all built in a distinctive Swiss style. The weather was warm and clear, making for a very pleasant drive. After passing through Lausanne, I continued on around Lake Geneva, toward the upper Rhone Valley. The first Orthodox holy place I wished to visit was St. Maurice (the ancient monastery of Agaunum).

Ouside of Lausanne I stopped to give a traveler a ride, which was very fortuitous. He turned out to be an American who had been studying in Thailand,

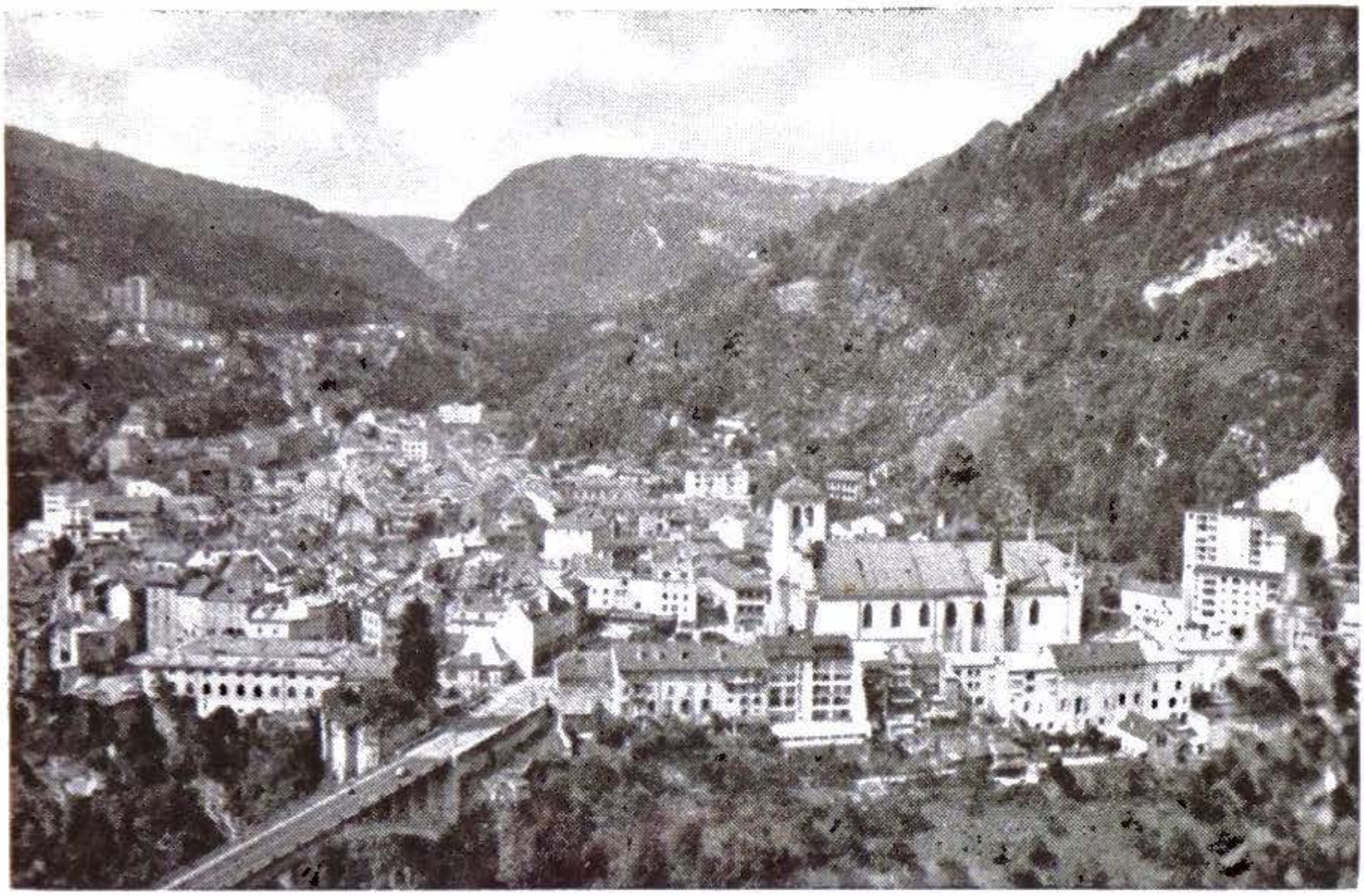
but for the previous six months had been making his way slowly overland through Asia and Europe. He was on his way to Paris for a flight home to Indiana. Of course I was very glad to meet a fellow-countryman. He was going toward Chamonix in France, and since St. Maurice was on the way he was glad to get a ride. His name was David.

The road from Lausanne to St. Maurice curves around the northeast side of Lake Geneva and then continues up the Rhone Valley. It is a very beautiful drive along the lake shore. The mountains are quite spectacular and the river valley is dotted with farms and villages. Soon we reached the town of St. Maurice. It is located next to steep cliffs; most of the surrounding countryside is farmland. We didn't have much difficulty finding the abbey with its prominent bell tower. After parking the car, we entered a building adjacent to the church and inquired whether anyone there could speak English. The porter who answered spoke only French, and with my poor French we didn't get very far. He directed us to the church, and there we found a young man apparently preparing for evening service. He was able to speak some English and was very helpful. It turned out that he was a young priest of the community of Augustinian canons which had inhabited the site since 1128, when the canons took over the Abbey. As a result of the reforms in the Roman church, the members of the community for the most part wear lay garb, except during their church services.

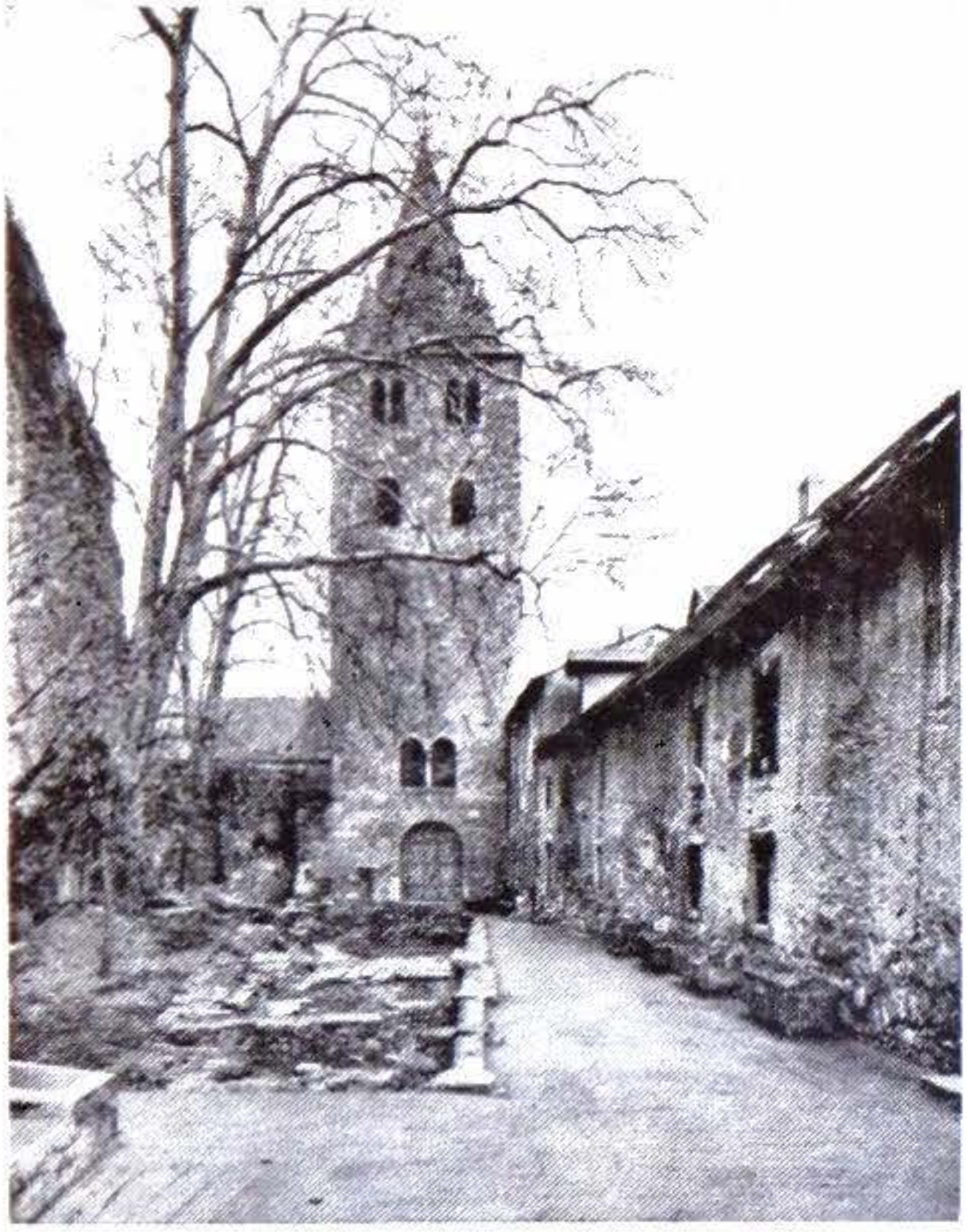
We had arrived too late for the last tour of the "Treasury," but the young priest was kind enough to see that we were able to view the relics and treasures. The relics of St. Maurice, as well as those of other saints, along with many ancient artifacts, are kept in a specially constructed vault. Unfortunately, everything is displayed like items in a museum rather than as holy relics. I boldly asked about the possibility of venerating the relics (which are kept behind glass), but they said it was impossible. Apparently, the relics are removed from the vault only once or twice during the year. Although there wasn't much time, I did manage to address a prayer to St. Maurice before his relics and I remembered your Brotherhood.

We were informed that one of the priests of the community was English, but he wasn't there at the time and would only be there the next day. I wanted to see more, but it was getting late and I had to think about where to spend the night. David (the American student) was heading for Chamonix, just over the border in France, and since he had information on inexpensive places to stay, I decided to go there for the night.

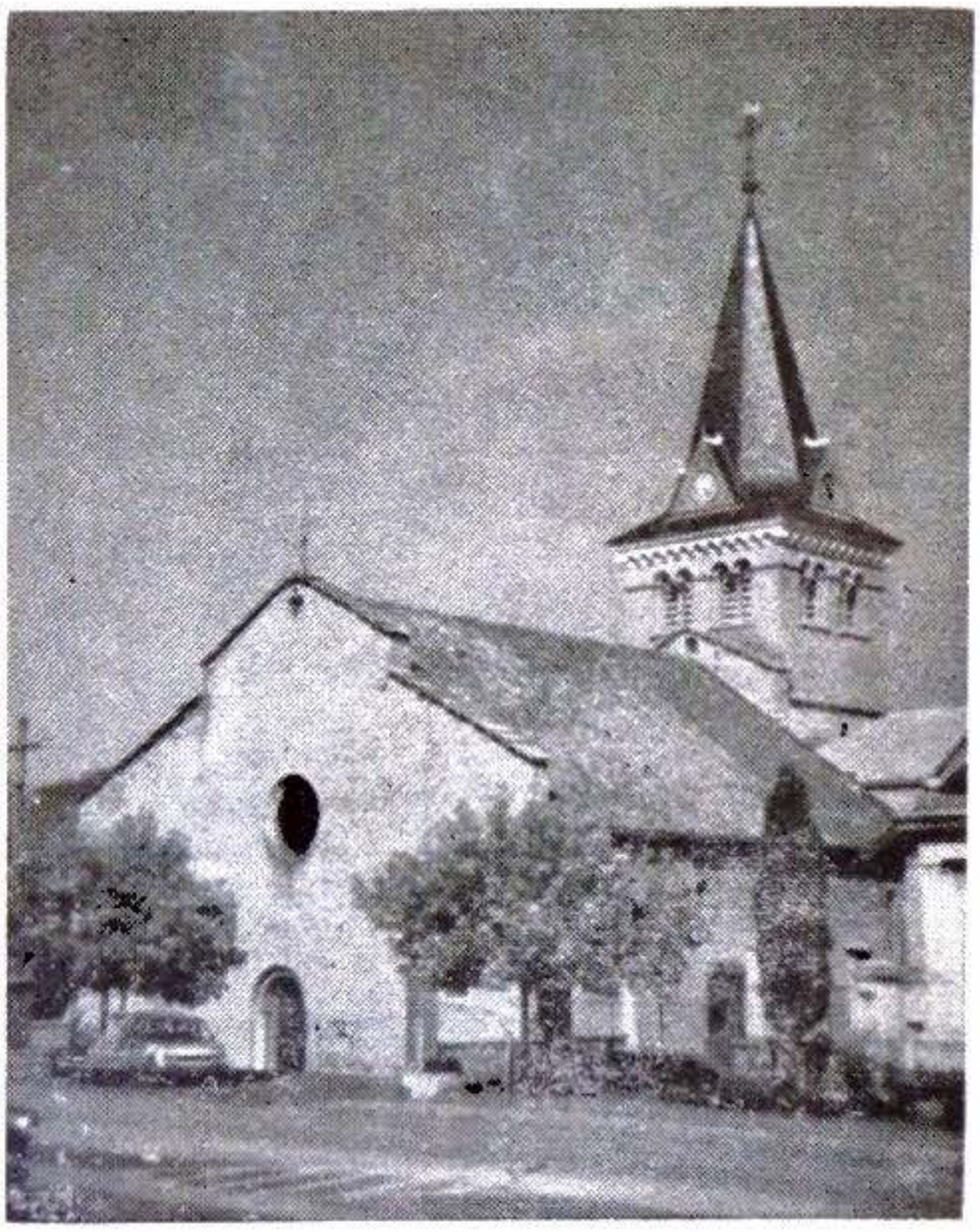
From St. Maurice we drove to Martigny and then began climbing into the mountains. It is a very steep and spectacular drive, especially the ascent from



The town of Saint-Claude — site of the ancient Condadisco

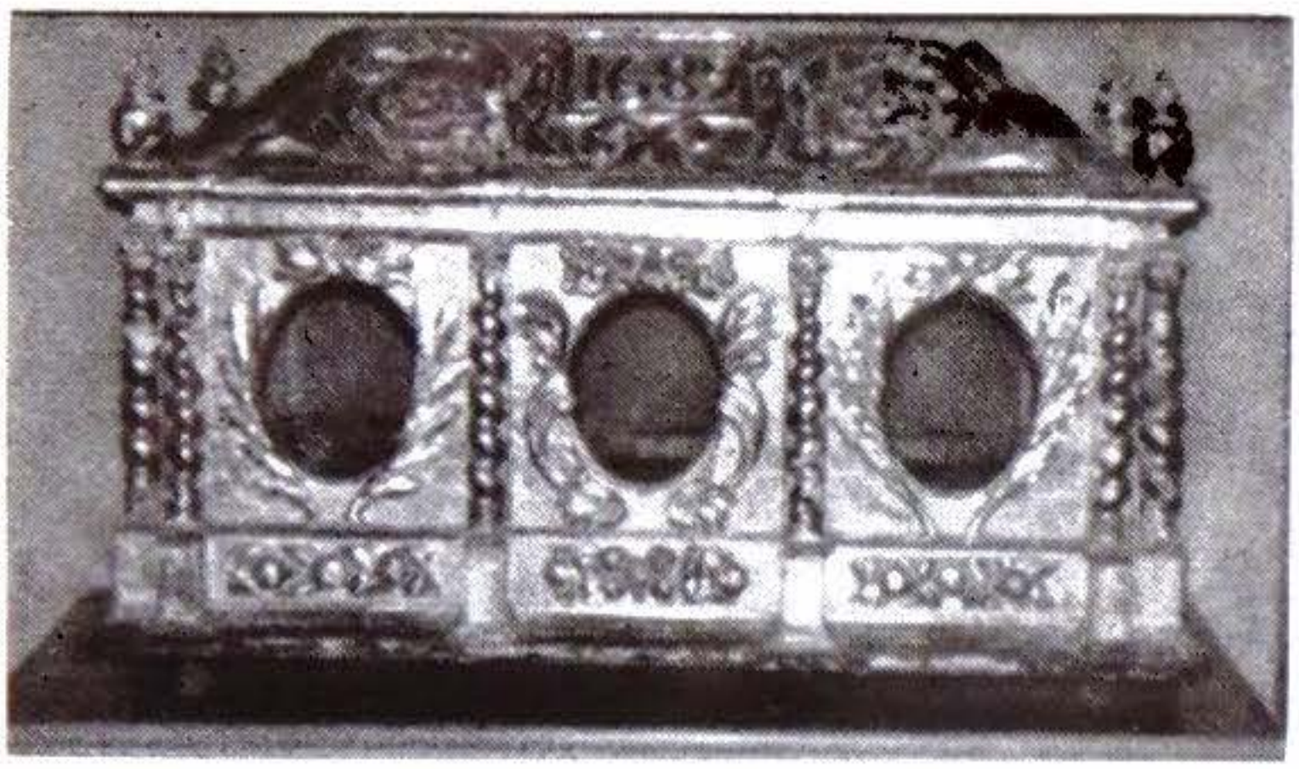


The Monastery of Agaunum, showing the foundation of the ancient Basilica

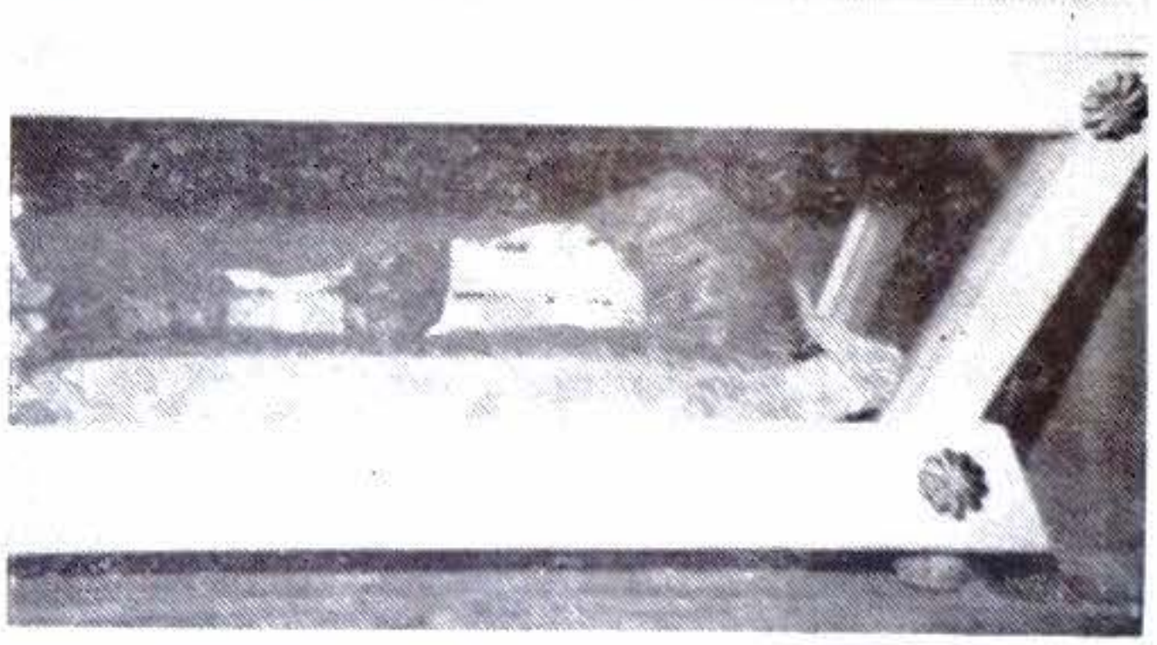


Church of St. Lupicinus, where his relics are kept

Chapel of St. Romanus, where his relics are kept



Reliquary of St. Lupicinus



Relics of St. Romanus

the Rhone Valley. We crossed the border into France and shortly thereafter came to Chamonix, where we ate supper and found an inexpensive place to spend the night.

We awoke the next morning in the shadow of Mont Blanc, which dominates majestically over the area. I planned to head back to St. Maurice, hoping to find the English priest and get some information from him about the abbey. From there I planned to travel on to Geneva. David agreed to go with me. I was glad to have the company.

A brief word about David. He was a young man about 21 years old, of medium height, with long blond hair in the style currently fashionable among young people. He had had some very interesting experiences during the course of his travels. I can't say that he was particularly religious, but he was open to religious ideas and he asked many questions of me during the time we were together. His background was Protestant, and he didn't have many firm beliefs other than some basic concepts about Christianity. Unfortunately he had acquired a few ideas — probably through his American educational experience — which would have to be labeled "liberal," and we had some lively discussions a couple of times.

We returned from Chamonix to St. Maurice and were able to find the English priest, Father Fox. He was an older man, although still energetic. He had definitely accepted aggiornamento and spoke somewhat deprecatingly of the French Archbishop Lefebre who has been defying the Pope about the Latin Mass and other reforms enacted at Vatican II. I did catch a note of regret, though, when Father Fox mentioned that the office in the abbey was now sung in French instead of the Latin which had been used for the previous 15 or so centuries.

Father Fox was very friendly. I explained to him why I had come, told him something about *The Orthodox Word,* and told him of your plans to publish some of the writings of St. Gregory of Tours. At this he became quite interested and immediately went to the abbey's library and pulled off the shelf an old volume of Migne's Latin Patrologia containing St. Gregory's works. Later he read to us a portion of the Saint's writings in which the abbey is mentioned.

Father Fox directed us to a pathway up the side of the cliff to a chapel where once there was a hermitage founded by a St. Amatus in the 6th century. The climb is rather steep, but the path is in good condition and has even been built up in spots. Apparently services are held there regularly and pilgrims go there often; when we reached the chapel, a nun was there praying. Nearby is a tiny house, indicating that perhaps even in recent times someone had been living there.

When we climbed down from the cliff, we met again with Father Fox, and he showed us the abbey church. The present church is old, but it is not the original one. The original church (apparently the basilica which St. Romanus visited) was built right up against the cliff; all that remains of it are the foundations and a crypt underneath. Father Fox told us that in excavating the crypt, they uncovered an ancient fresco which vanished within a matter of hours, apparently from being exposed to the air — but not before they were able to photograph it.

The highlight of my whole visit to the abbey was seeing the actual spot in the crypt where the relics of St. Maurice and other martyrs had lain. I asked Father Fox for a piece of stone from the tomb where the relics had lain, and although he hesitated at first, he finally gave me a piece of rock from the actual spot where St. Maurice's relics had been, and another piece from a spot a few feet away where other relics had been.

As we left St. Maurice, we stopped to see the parish church of St. Sigismund, a pious king of the Burgundians in the 6th century. He helped to found the abbey and introduced the *laus perennis* there; his relics lie beneath the altar in the parish church. I was able to offer brief prayers here also. We continued our journey along the southern shore of Lake Geneva, crossing into France and then back into Switzerland just before reaching the city of Geneva.

Geneva is a bustling metropolis and very international in character. I first wanted to find our Russian Orthodox Cathedral and also Archbishop Anthony, with the hope of getting a place to spend the night. We found the cathedral but could not locate the Archbishop. I found out later that he was visiting in Germany at the time. Since David had some information about inexpensive lodging, we made some calls and found a place located right near the Palace of the Legion of Nations. The next day we returned to the Russian Cathedral in order to see the interior. The exterior is very impressive, the interior less so. I lit a candle in memory of Bishop Leonty of Geneva, the brother of the present Archbishop, and then we left, driving toward the French Jura. David had decided to accompany me into France.

The Jura are not far from Switzerland. They are not as impressive as the Alps, but they do have their own beauty and are quite rugged. After the initial climb into the mountains, we came upon a very pleasant valley where I made a wrong turn. We travelled quite a few kilometers before I discovered my mistake, but it was nice driving through the countryside, where mostly farms and small villages were to be found. Once I got going in the correct direction, we

eventually came to St. Claude. It is a busy town, and it seems to be somewhat of a resort too. Because my French is so poor, I searched diligently for someone who could speak English, but in the local tourist office and the cathedral they could speak only French. It was very discouraging, especially since I had so many questions to ask.

The cathedral, built on the site of St. Romanus' monastery, dates from the middle ages, but is not really outstanding in any particular way. The town itself is dominated on one side by steep cliffs (LeBayard). Inside the cathedral is a chapel to St. Claude, who was an abbot and also bishop in the 7th century. The incorrupt relics of the saint were destroyed by revolutionaries during the French Revolution, and all that remains is a finger of the left hand. I was able to pray before this relic and light candles too.

Since I was having such a difficult time finding anyone with whom to talk about St. Romanus and his monastery, I decided to travel on to some of the other nearby sites that you wrote me of. The next stop was the village of St. Lupicin.

It seems that the site of St. Romanus' monastery was not particularly suitable for farming, and as the brotherhood increased it was necessary to find other places to raise food. One of these spots was the present village of St. Lupicin, named after the brother of St. Romanus. St. Lupicinus lived mostly at this monastery established to provide food for the main monastery. The village is not far from St. Claude, but there is a difference in terrain, and the area around St. Lupicin appears to be definitely more suitable for farming.

St. Lupicin is a sleepy village. The main building is the church, which seems to be fairly old, although I wouldn't want to guess just how old. The front door is below street level. There is nothing spectacular about the church itself, but I was very pleased to find that the relics of St. Lupicinus were there, resting beneath a side altar. I was able to offer prayers before these relics also.

Not far from the church, down a side street, is the house of the village priest. I think that the buildings of this house were once part of the monastery. I managed to find the priest, and we were able to converse because he spoke some German. He was very pleasant. I explained why I was there and what I was looking for, and he gave me directions on how to find the village of St.-Romain. He also told me about the grotto of St. Anne, which is located near St.-Claude. This priest (who was also dressed in lay garb) made one comment which I thought was quite accurate. He said that there was very great veneration for saints in the Orthodox Church, while among Protestants there was hardly any at all; as for the Roman Catholics, he said that they were somewhere in between. This priest men-

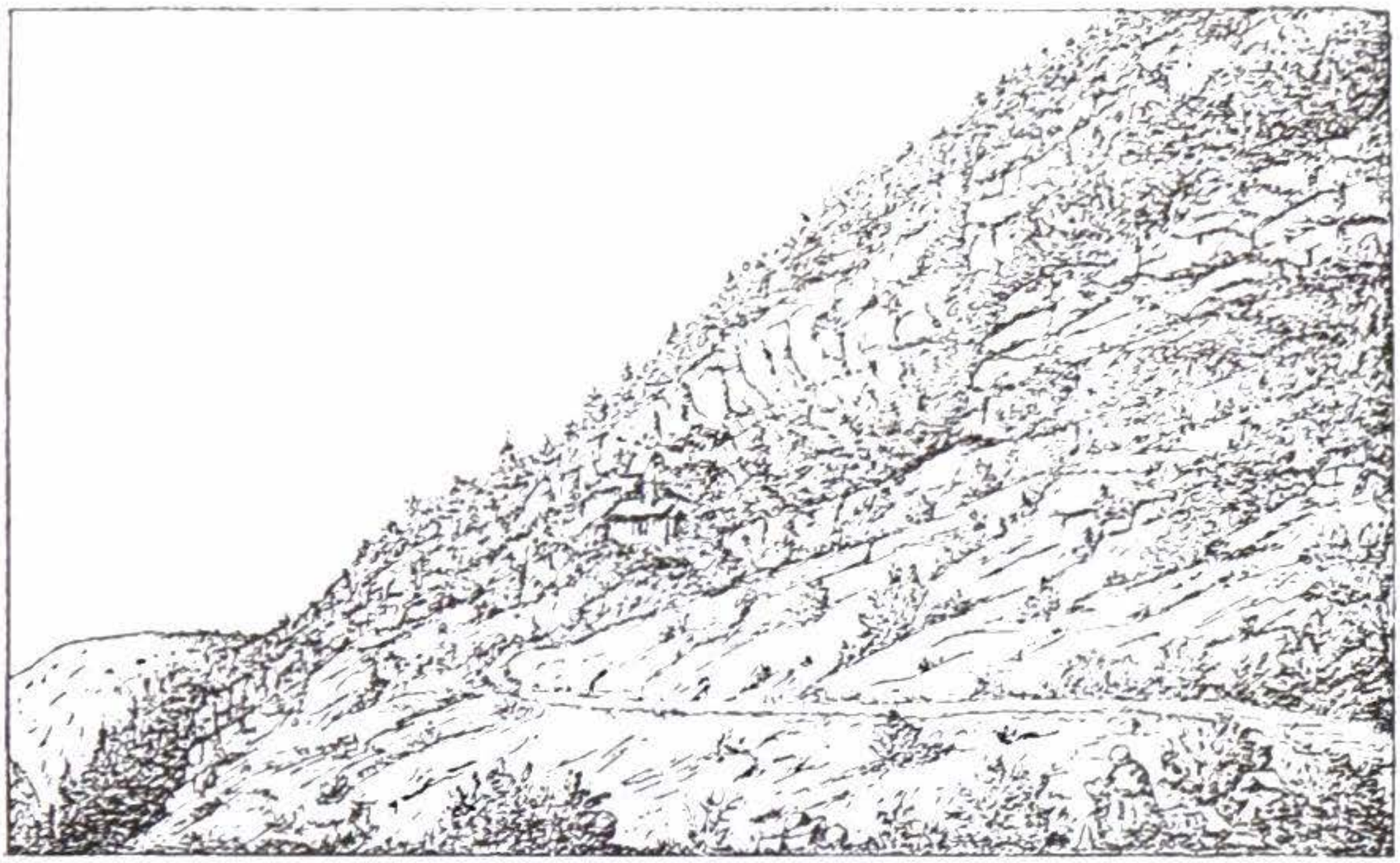
tioned that very soon a pamphlet about the church of St.-Lupicin was due to be published and would have pictures.

From St.-Lupicin we drove about five kilometers to the village of St.-Romain. Outside of the village, on a cliff overlooking the river valley, there is a small chapel. The chapel is right on the edge of some steep cliffs. It is completely bare, and besides the altar there is only the reliquary, containing the relics of St. Romanus, which is on the altar. I went around to the back of the altar to see if the reliquary could be opened, and sure enough, there was a small door. Inside, there was a glass case with the relics of St. Romanus. It was truly a great blessing to have been deemed worthy to see the Saint's relics and pray before them.

From St.-Romain we returned to St-Claude, mainly so I could find the grotto of St. Anne. I was directed to follow a path leading up into the cliffs. On the way I took a cone and branch from one of the fir trees, as you requested. I managed to find the grotto, but it was just a large cave, and there was no indication of anything religious about it. Apparently it had served as the dwelling of a hermit in the ancient past. About half-way up to the grotto was an old house which was abandoned.

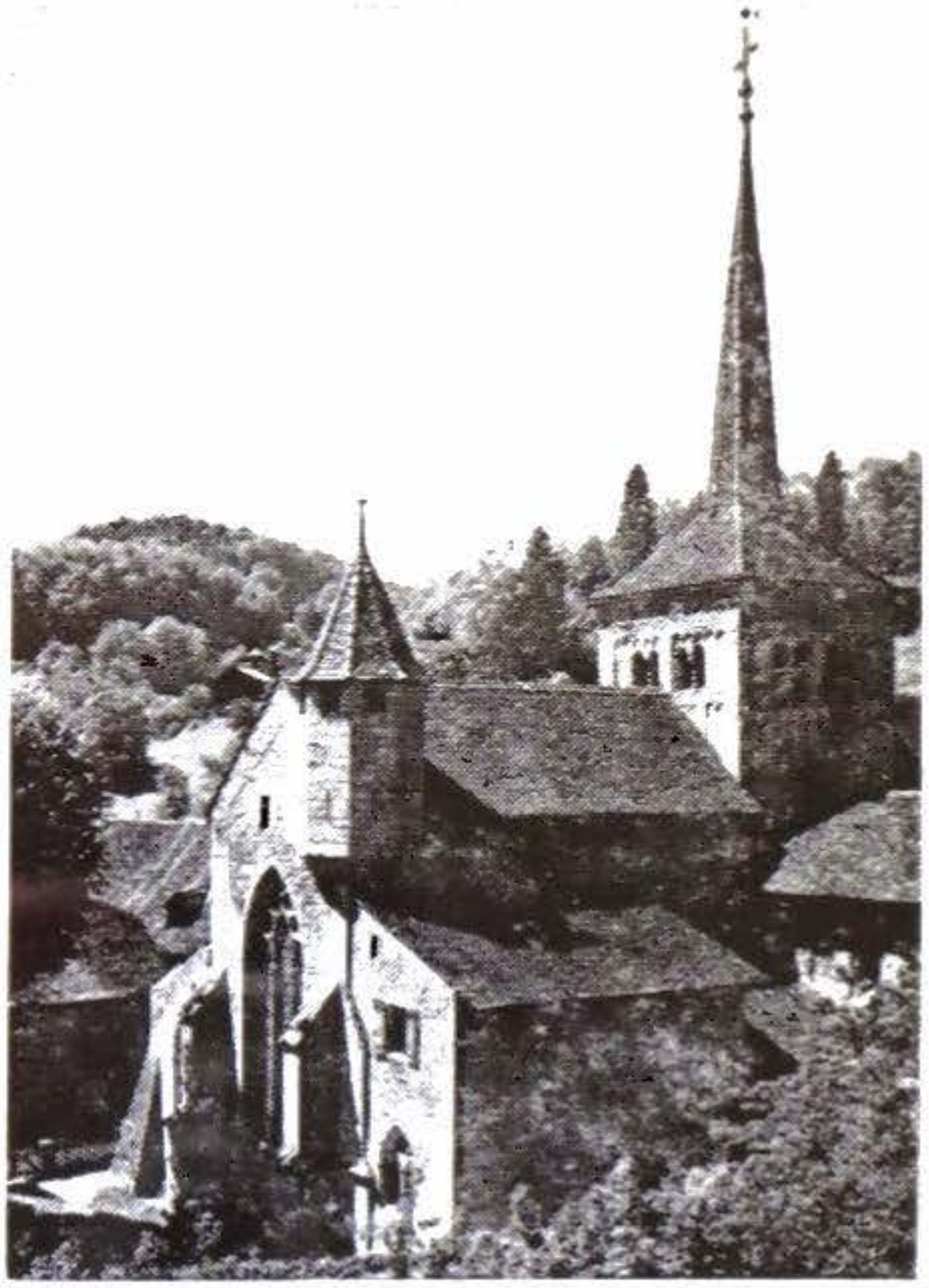
We now headed towards Grandvaux. Our road took us north, out of the high mountainous region and into the beautiful countryside dotted with lakes and rolling hills. The lake of Grandvaux is very beautiful. At one time there was a monastery on this lake, one of those founded by the monks of the Jura after the time of St. Romanus; but now all that remains is a village and a parish church. The church was closed, so I didn't see the interior. We also visited the Lac de Bonlieu, which is more isolated than Grandvaux. A plaque near the lake mentions a Carthusian foundation that once existed on the spot. A short distance away from the lake I noticed several buildings which appeared to be a monastery of some kind, but I really wasn't able to tell for sure.

In the morning we were on the road again, heading now towards Germany. Along the way we stopped in Romainmoutier, which is southwest of the Lake of Neuchatel. This is the site of a monastery founded by St Romanus. The village, situated in a lovely, peaceful valley, is quite old and picturesque. The church is quite old — about a thousand years or so — and has been nicely restored. The interior is now very plain, in the style of a Protestant church, as it has been since the Bernese imposed their rule and Protestant religion on the town during the Reformation. Originally there were frescos on the walls, but the Protestants whitewashed them. Some of the frescos have been restored, although they are pretty faint. At present the church is in Protestant hands; there are two

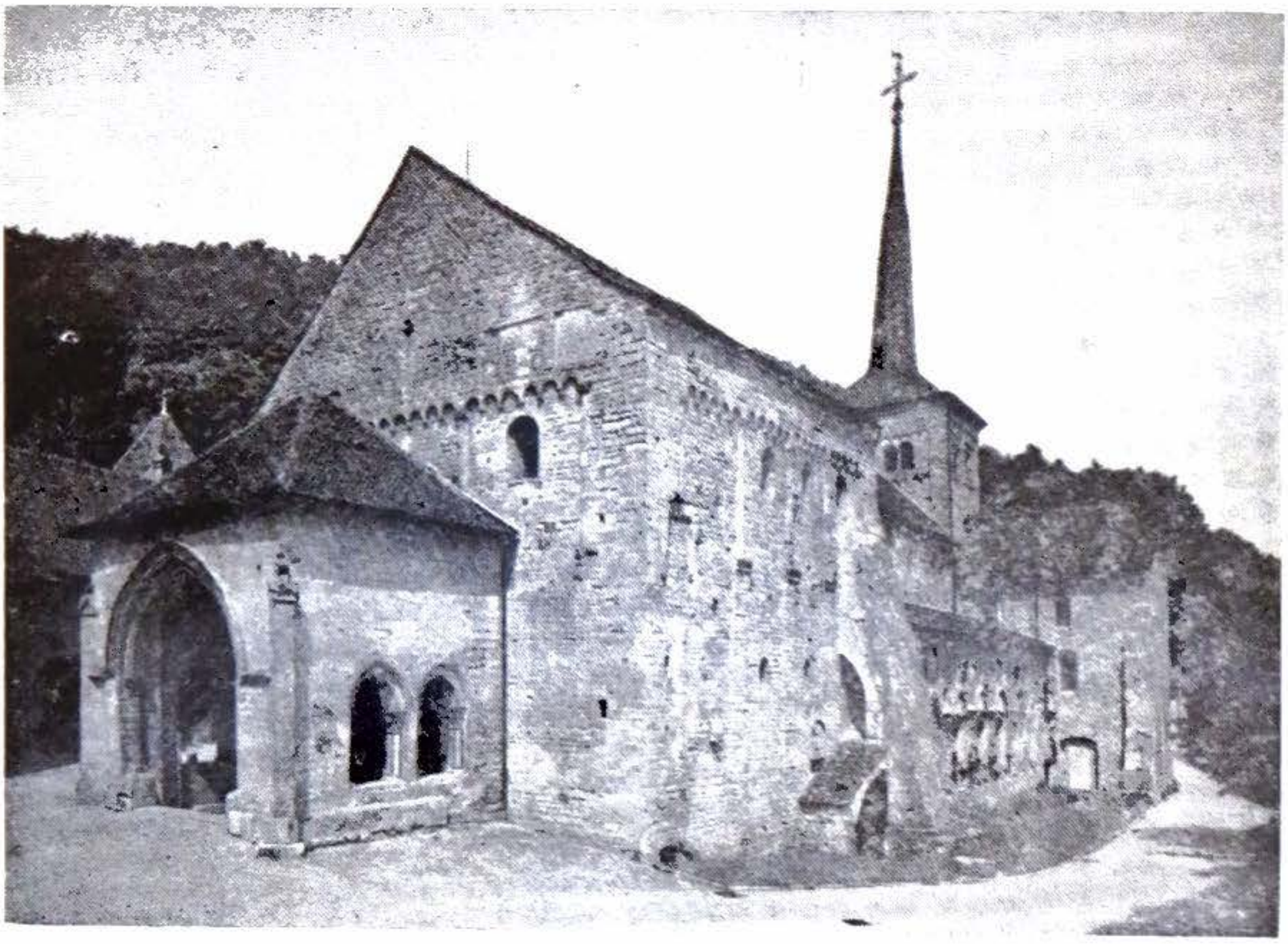


The grotto and hermitage of St. Anne, on the mountain above Condadisco

The fir forest around Condadisco



Roumainmoutier — ancient church of St. Romanus' Monastery in Switzerland



Protestant sisters who take care of it, assisted by two Roman Catholic sisters, with whom, in "ecumenical" fashion, they say their prayers together.

From Romainmoutier we made our way back to Basel and on into Germany, eventually arriving at my home. Thus the pilgrimage ended. In a few short days I covered quite a few miles and saw many interesting and inspiring things. I would have liked to have spent more time, but it just wasn't possible. I was able to see the relics of many saints and visit the places sanctified by their holy lives, for which I am grateful.

It is all very hidden, however. These saints are, with the exception of some local veneration, unknown and uncared for. What is worse is that undoubtedly there are many other places in the West similar to the sites I visited which are just as neglected. One no longer finds pilgrims — only tourists. The various holy places have endured much over the years; they have suffered from wars, from the Reformation, and from revolution. But now, in the 20th century, these wonderful places have been turned into tourist attractions. It seems to be the ultimate blasphemy. All that one takes away from such museums is coldness and a feeling of regret for that which is lost.

I attempted to explain to David about saints and their importance for Orthodox Christians. It wasn't easy, since the concept has fallen into such disuse in the West. And yet, the concept is such a profound one. Really, the saints are the key to Orthodoxy. They are not ideas and theories which scholars and pseudo-scholars banter about, but rather they are theology in practice, they are living bearers of Orthodoxy, they are what we must become. And the glory of the Orthodox Church is that the saints are alive and real and present, leading the way for us and helping us along by their examples and teachings and prayers. If the saints are not what they should be for us, it is because we have departed from them and forgotten and neglected them. What is terrifying for us is that we too are in danger of losing the saints, just as the West lost them before us. It is only by struggles and diligent effort that we can hold on to the saints.

Archbishop John, by merely showing interest in the saints of the West, has given the impetus for us to strive to know and love the saints of the West as truly our own. And to whom else do they belong, if not to us?

I thank you with my whole heart for suggesting this pilgrimage to me and also for your suggestions and advice on what to see. May God bless you in your efforts to kindle in the Orthodox Christians of these last days the fire that shone so brightly and continues to shine for those who have the eyes to see, in the saints of the West.

(*Continued from page 122.*)

art of directing and governing. For if the blessed Romanus was very merciful towards all, with a perfect calmness, his brother was more severe, both in correcting and directing others, and first of all towards himself. Romanus, when all hope of pardon had been lost, would spontaneously make use of indulgence toward the guilty ones; while the other, fearing lest small sins, repeated, should end in great ones, gave reproaches with great vehemence. Romanus would impose on the brothers no more privations than their own will would accept; while Lupicinus, offering his own example to all, permitted none to avoid what the help of God made possible" (ch. 17). The austerities of St. Lupicinus are described in rather greater detail (chs. 63-67) than in St. Gregory's life.

Toward the end of his life St. Romanus made the longest journey recorded in his Life — a pilgrimage to the site of the martyrdom of St. Maurice and the Theban Legion in the third century. "In the ardor of his faith, he decided to go to Agaunum to the basilica of the saints — I should rather say, to the camp of the martyrs —, according to the testimony furnished by the account of their passion" (ch. 44). The first account of the martyrdom of these saints is that of St. Eucherius of Lyons, which St. Romanus had apparently read. On this journey, near Geneva, occurred the incident with the lepers mentioned by St. Gregory. The organizaion of an actual monastery at Agaunum (as distinct from the cells of individual monks around the basilica, such as existed at the time of St. Romanus) dates from the early years of the 6th century, when the *laus perennis* (continual chanting of the psalms) was introduced there from Constantinople; the monastery of Condadisco at that time sent 100 monks to form one of the nine choirs that alternated in the psalm-singing.

The death of St. Romanus occurred in the convent which he had established, where he had gone to bid farewell to his sister (ch. 60); this was about in the year 460. St. Gregory, in his Life of the brothers, does not mention the convent, perhaps because it no longer existed in his day; but he does mention the burial of St. Romanus outside the monastery, where women would have access to his relics.

Among the brothers who were being trained in monasticism by the two saints, there reigned above all an absolute *oneness of soul* based on self-sacrifice — a concept which is at the heart of Orthodox monasticism, whether of East or West. "According to the custom of apostolic times, absolutely no one would say,

'This is mine.' The difference between one person and another resided solely in the possession of his name, and not in consideration of his fortune or nobility. Content with their destitution, they practiced oneness of soul *(unanimitas)* in love and faith with such fervor, that if a brother, having received an order to do some task, should go out in cold weather, or if he should have just returned all soaked by a winter rain, everyone would eagerly abandon his most comfortable and driest garment or would take off his footwear the sooner to warm and comfort the body of his brother, rather than to think of himself" (chs. 112-113).

St. Lupicinus governed the monasteries some twenty years after the death of St. Romanus and finally reposed in extreme old age, practicing the severest austerities to the end (refusing in the last moments of his final illness the consolation of a little honey with water). He was buried in the monastery of Laucone, where in 1689 a part of his relics were uncovered with perhaps his original tombstone, and where they remain to this day in the parish church of St.-Lupicin.

THE THIRD OF THE GREAT Jura Fathers, St. Eugendus, is not treated by St. Gregory, but he should be mentioned here for his historical importance in the development of monasticism in the West. He was offered by his father, a parish priest, to the monastery during the lifetime of St. Romanus and, as has been said, remained there without leaving it until his death at the age of over sixty, in about the year 513.

In the monastery "he acquired a solid knowledge, not only of Latin works, but also of Greek eloquence" (ch. 126). If St. Eugendus actually knew the Greek language, it would be a rare thing for late 5th-century Gaul; but in any case it is clear that the tie with the Greek East was still very strong in the Jura monasteries at this time, even if the Eastern Fathers were more probably read in Latin translations. We know that the daily reading in the refectory at Condadisco (a custom introduced by St. Eugendus, "following the ancient Fathers" and in particular St. Basil (ch. 169); in the time of Sts. Romanus and Lupicinus the traditional silence of the Egyptian monasteries was maintained) included "the institutions promulgated of old by the holy and eminent Basil, bishop of the capital of Cappadocia, or those of the holy Fathers of Lerins, or those of Saint Pachomius the ancient abba of the Syrians, or those which most recently the venerable Cassian has formulated" (ch. 174). If St. Romanus had begun his monastic life with only two books, it is clear that his successors had a well-equipped Patristic library!

In his asceticism St. Eugendus kept up the strict standard of his predecessors; his vigils were remarkable, and he ate but once a day, "sometimes at noon, with all the community, when he was tired, and sometimes in the evening, with the monks who took a second meal" (ch. 131). He had only one garment, which he would wear until it was worn out (ch. 127), and his footwear was "solid and rustic, in the fashion of the ancient Fathers. His legs were bound with leggings, and his feet in bands. But for the office of Matins and that of Lauds he never had around his naked feet, even in the most severe frosts or when there was much snow, anything but wooden overshoes in the Gallic manner. It was with this footwear also that, very often, in the morning hours, he would walk far in the snow in order to go to the cemetery of the brethren and pray there" (ch. 129). Like Sts. Romanus and Lupicinus, he was a miracle-worker, and his fame was widespread, so that for centuries the town that sprang up around Condadisco bore his name *(Saint-Oyend* in French). There were so many pilgrims that they "seemed almost to exceed in number the multitude of monks" (ch. 147).

St. Eugendus directed the monks with the utmost prudence and wisdom: "He took all care to assign to each monk the functions or tasks for which he found him more particularly endowed by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Thus a brother who was peaceable and gentle would be given a service and a post where the advantages of his gentleness and patience would not be at all altered by the heat of an agitated companion. Did he find others, on the contrary, marked by the blemish of pride or vanity? He would not permit them to live apart, out of fear that, puffed up by an injurious feeling of their personal superiority, they might fall lower, into more serious faults, no longer even realizing their sins and vices, in spite of repeated public reprimands. Did he learn, in the meantime, that certain brothers, suffering the condition of human weakness, were the prey of the biting of a devouring sadness? He would come unexpectedly, deliberately show such supernatural pleasantness and joy, warm the heart of the unfortunate ones by words so holy and sweet, that the latter purified of the most harmful venom of sadness, would find themselves healed of their bitter pessimism as by the anointment of a healing oil. But the monks whose conduct was too free, those who were light-minded, found always in he Abba more of roughness and severity" (chs. 149-150).

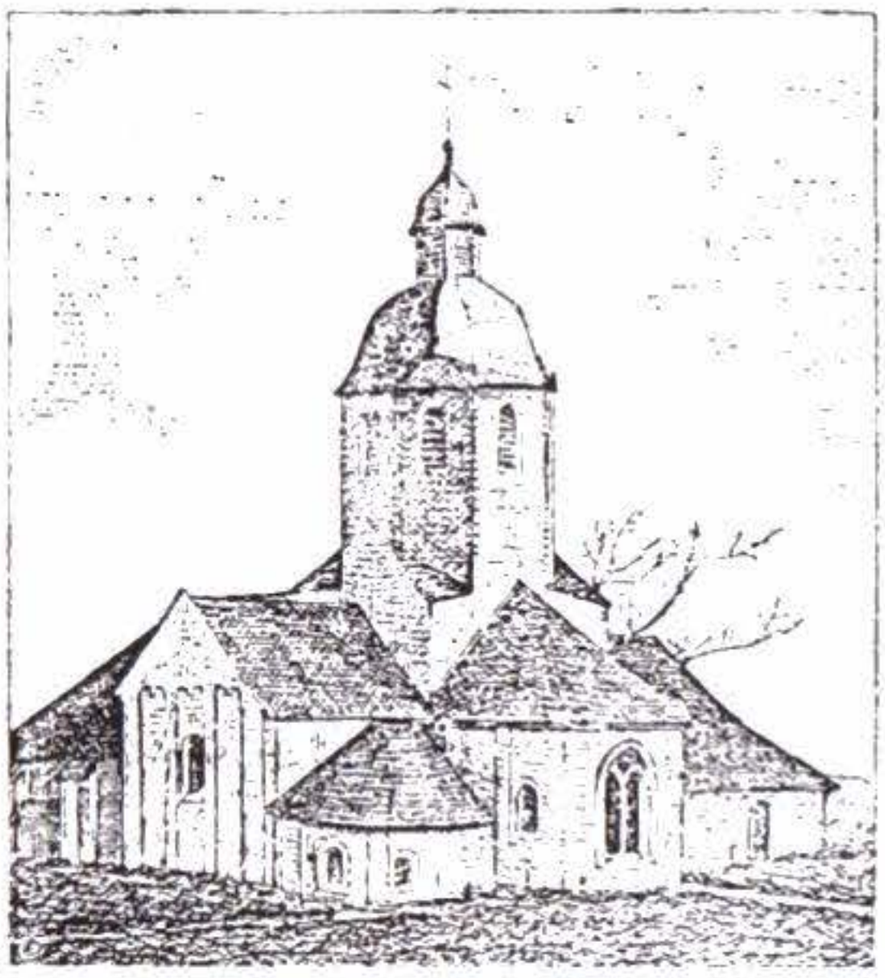
THERE WAS ONE EVENT during St. Eugendus' governance of the monasteries that marks a whole change of epoch in Western monasticism. Occurring about the year 500, it is a kind of watershed between the less organized,

semi-hermitic, lavra-type monasticism of the 4th and 5th centuries, which was very dependent upon the personal qualities of the great monastic founders (St. Martin, St. Honoratus, Sts. Romanus and Lupicinus), and the more strictly coenobitic monasticism of the 6th and later centuries. This event was the total destruction by fire of the monastery at Condadisco. "As it was built of wood, and not only was composed of a block of cells bound together one to the other by their frame, but had also been doubled by a well- arranged second story, it was so suddenly reduced to ashes that, the next morning, not only did nothing remain of the buildings, but the fire itself was already almost entirely extinguished" (ch. 162). There were so many monks then in the monastery that, even apart from the fire, the Eastern lavra ideal of monks in separate cells had become impractical; the cells, rather than being a certain distance apart (a stone's throw, in the later description of the skete ideal by the Russian St. Nilus of Sora) were actually joined to each other. Therefore St. Eugendus, when rebuilding the monastery, introduced a strict coenobitic rule rather in the spirit of St. Pachomius than in that of most of the other monastic Fathers of the East. "Refusing to follow on this point the example of the oriental archimandrites, he did a more useful thing in subjecting all the monks to the common life. After the destruction of the small individual cells, he decided that all should take their repose with him in a single shelter: those whom a common refectory had already united for a common meal, he wished to unite also in a common dormitory, only the beds being separate. In this place there was, as in the oratory, an oil lamp which gave its light the whole night long" (ch. 170).

One cannot but regret the disappearance of the early monastic "informality" of the West; but the dominance of the coenobitic Rule was actually unavoidable. St. Martin with his 80 monks could live in the isolation of Marmoutier like the "oriental archimandrites" with the brethren in their lavras; perhaps even a few hundred brothers could live like that in the remote Jura Mountains. But when there came to be multitudes of monastic aspirants (perhaps as many as a thousand), a strict regulation of them was obviously required. This need had been felt also in the East, as may be seen in the coenobitic establishments of Sts. Pachomius in Egypt and Theodosius in Palestine with their thousands of monks; but the lavra or skete ideal remained alive in the East and was never simply replaced by the coenobitic ideal.

In the West, the 6th century is the century of the great writers of monastic coenobitic Rules (St. Caesarius of Arles, St. Benedict of Nursia, St. Columbanus of Luxeuil and Bobbio, the Irish monk who settled in Gaul and then Italy). Condadisco also had its own Rule, suited to "the climate of the country

and the necessities of labor" as well as to "Gallic infirmity" (ch. 174); unfortunately, this Rule has not come down to us. Thanks to such Rules, a particular way of monastic life could spread farther and have more lasting influence than could the example of a single monastic founder. This is particularly noticeable in the spread of the Rule of St. Columbanus in the 7th century, especially in Gaul, and even more noticeable in the spread of the Benedictine Rule throughout the West in the 7th and later centuries. By Carolingian times (9th and 10th centuries) the Rule of St. Benedict was supreme even in individualistic Gaul. Thus monasticism survived and was in relatively good order; but the freshness and "non-establishment" character of the young monastic movement was thereby largely lost. With monasticism such a small and fragile phenomenon in the Orthodox world today, it is no wonder if we are drawn more to the early "unorganized" phase of it in the West rather than to the later "organized" phase. Sixth-century Gaul, with few exceptions, still retained the early, individualistic character of monasticism; this is really the only kind to be seen in the *Life of the Fathers,* which, apart from bishop-ascetics, deals mostly with hermits and desert-dwellers, whether in the wilderness or in cities.



The church of St. Hymetiere, where relics of the 6th-century saint are kept

In the 6th and later centuries, still other monastic communities were established in the Jura by monks from Condadisco; at such sites as Grandvaux and the Lac de Bonlieu there are still ruins of these monasteries. At the village of St.-Hymetiere, near the town of Antre, may still be seen one of the oldest surviving churches of the Jura region; built in the 7th or 8th century, it houses the relics of St. Hymetiere, a 6th-century monk of Condadisco who founded a hermitage there.

The author of the *Life of the Jura Fathers* was a disciple and intimate of St. Eugendus, and thus he is able to relate about him something of his hidden spiritual life. In particular, he tells of five visions which St. Eugendus had and described to him in detail. These are: a childhood vision of Sts. Romanus and Lupicinus showing him his spiritual posterity (chs. 121-124); his installation as abbot by the two saints, which occurred just before he was in fact made abbot (chs. 135-136); the visit of the Apostles Peter, Andrew and Paul, who announced the arrival of pieces of their relics from Rome (chs. 153-154); the vision of St. Martin of Tours (who was held in the highest veneration in the Jura monasteries), who informed St. Eugendus that he was watching over two travelling monks of the monastery (ch. 160); and the final appearance of Sts. Romanus and Lupicinus, five days before his death, carrying him to the oratory for his funeral while his own monks protested (chs. 176-177).

The longest and most detailed of these visions is well worthy of comparison with similar visions in Eastern hagiographical literature (for example, the vision of the birds, signifying his spiritual posterity, in the Life of St. Sergius of Radonezh): "The holy child, in a vision, was carried by two monks and placed before the entrance of his father's house, in such a way that he could behold with an attentive gaze the eastern region of the sky and its stars, as before the Patriarch Abraham beheld his numerous posterity. And already he was also told, in a sort of figurative language: 'Such will be your seed' (Gen. 15:5). A little after this, one person appeared here, a second there, another in a different place, until the growing crowd of them became numberless; they surrounded the blessed child and the holy Fathers — without any doubt, Romanus and Lupicinus — who had spiritually raised him up. . . It was as if an enormous swarm of bees, resembling a honey-flowing cluster, came together around them and enclosed them. And suddenly, from the side towards which his gaze was directed, Eugendus saw as it were a vast door open in the heights of heaven and a path of gentle slope descend from the summit of heaven to him, surrounded by light and resembling a slightly-inclined staircase with steps of crystal, and choirs of angels clothed in white and brightly shining, coming towards him and his companions: they joyfully exulted in the praise of Christ, and yet, despite the ever-increasing number of persons, the sacred fear of the Divinity, which struck them with amazement, did not allow any of them to move his lips to speak or his head to make a sign. Little by litle, with care, the angelic multitude mixed with the mortals; the angels gathered these earthly beings, joined them to themselves, and singing all the same song, mounted again towards the sacred abodes of heaven as they had come.

"Among the modulations of this hymn, the holy child understood only one phrase, a phrase of the Gospel, as he learned about a year later when he entered the monastery. Here is what the alternate choir of the angelic multitude said, in antiphonal manner (I remember it very well, because Eugendus himself had the kindness to relate it to me): 'I am the Way and the Life and the Truth' (John 14:6). Then the immense crowd retired; having been long beheld, the region of the heavens filled with stars also closed; the child, seeing himself alone in this place, awoke with a start and, struck with terror by this vision, immediately related the event to his father. And the holy priest recognized at once to whom supremely such a holy son should be consecrated. Without delaying, he taught him the rudiments of knowledge, and at the end of the same year Eugendus was offered to St. Romanus . . . In him, truly, converged the double profusion of graces accorded to the blessed Abbas who had spiritually transported him outside his earthly dwelling, so that the generation which immediately followed that of these Abbas already hesitated, asking whether in Eugendus it beheld the image of Lupicinus or that of Romanus" (chs. 121-125).

In this striking description of Jacob's Ladder (Gen. 28:12) — the same image which St. Eucherius had used in his *Praise of the Desert* to describe the "unseen visitation" of "rejoicing angels making watchful call upon the desert expanse" (ch. 38) — the author of the *Life of the Jura Fathers* well indicates the spiritual offspring of Condadisco and monastic Gaul in general. St Gregory's *Life of the Fathers* will give us in some detail the quality of this monastic movement which was still so powerful in his own day, a century after this vision.

Orthodox Monasticism Today

IN THE LIGHT OF ORTHODOX MONASTIC GAUL

WHAT HAS ALL THIS to say to us today? Is there a still-living message for us in the examples of Sts. Romanus and Lupicinus, in the words of the great Western Fathers of monasticism, in St. Gregory's monastic Gaul of the 5th and 6th centuries? Let us look for a moment at our own situation.

Orthodox monasticism is coming to the West today also as something new and fresh, and it is attracting increasing interest especially among converts to the Orthodox Faith. The Orthodox mission in the West up to the mid-20th century did not produce a monastic movement, but in the last 20 years or so, as serious monastic literature has become available, especially in English, there has been a definite manifestation not only of interest in Orthodox monasticism, but of the practice of it as well. Parallel to this manifestation in Western Europe and America, there has been also a noticeable monastic "revival" in Greece and Mt. Athos. Often, and most logically, this monastic movement (although it is perhaps too early to call it that) is bound up with the preservation of Orthodox tradition in general, as against the general religious current of modernism and renovationism, and it has already been responsible for something of a revival of the ancient standards of Orthodox piety — the veneration of saints and holy relics, the serious reading of Lives of Saints and basic Patristic texts on spiritual life, love for the fullness of the Orthodox Divine services, and the like. Today—in sharp contrast to the situation only a quarter-century ago — it is quite possible for an Orthodox convert to undertake the monastic path with some hope of success.

The aspirant who wishes to undertake the monastic life today finds before him three general types of monastic situation:

1. A long-established institution with a definite place in the church "organization." Here the emphasis is usually on the institution itself, which continues to exist without change no matter who comes or goes. The monastic authorities in general mistrust any idea of change or "renewal," and the "zealotry" common in young novices is viewed as being bound up with a spiritual immaturity which can only be outgrown by long experience. Such institutions perform an immense and difficult — and usually thankless — labor in handing down the Orthodox monastic tradition as well as possible in a world that is profoundly hostile to it; these monasteries are actually citadels of Orthodoxy in a foreign world. Monastic aspirants today, however, are easily disillusioned by such monasteries, looking at their faults (both real and imagined) with an overly-critical eye, and regarding them as "idiorhythmic" and as having departed from pure monastic traditions; those who do stay in such monasteries can find it a heavy burden, due most of all to the immense disharmony between the Orthodox spiritual life and the life of the contemporary world. But the unbroken connection with the past in such communities, and the very suffering required to remain in them, continue to produce spiritual fruit. Those who can remain in them without falling into apathy, carelessness, or discouragement can attain to a high spiritual state; but very often the young aspirant will leave them in order to seek something more "correct" or "perfect".

2. An individual struggler, usually a convert, inspired with the highest monastic ideals (often skete or hermit life), "opens a monastery" and begins to live according to his idea or adaptation of the great monastic strugglers of the past, sometimes attracting a few disciples. This is the most dangerous of the monastic paths open today. Its great temptation is over-reliance on oneself; its great pitfall is loss of contact with the age-old monastic tradition. The 20th century has already had a rich experience of eccentric "elders" whose ultimate authority is their own opinions. Prof. I. M. Kontzevitch, in his classic work on the institution of elders or *startsi* in the Orthodox Church *(Optina Monastery and its Epoch,* Jordanville, 1970, in Russian), felt compelled to write a special section (pp. 10-13) on the "false elders" who cripple and ruin so many souls in their spiritual pretentiousness; among converts this is an especially dangerous temptation. Even when they do not go far astray, such "elders" are seldom able to offer the monastic aspirant anything more than their own inexperienced human opinions of what monastic struggles should be. Often, in such monastic

attempts, spiritual wounds remain unhealed through a lack of mutual trust between spiritual father and spiritual child; thus deeply-rooted sins and inclinations may remain unconfessed and untreated. (This can happen in the "established" monasteries also, but usually with less serious spiritual consequences, since the authentic monastic environment itself can at least partially compensate for any personal deficiencies.) Sometimes also, unknown to the aspirant himself, the energy for struggles comes more from the passions, especially from hidden pride and vainglory, than from a genuine thirst for God. Numerous examples from the past, to be sure, show that such a path is a *possible* one; but the conditions of today's world render the probability of success and spiritual soundness in such an undertaking rather small. When his own spiritual energy and resources are exhausted, the individual struggler on such a path often collapses and gives up spiritual struggle (and sometimes Orthodoxy) altogether. The Life of St. Romanus of the Jura (as also many other Lives of Saints, such as that of St. Sergius of Radonezh) gives us some of the basic necessities for success in a monastic path outside an already established monastery: deep roots in Orthodoxy since childhood, with a childhood experience of the simplicity and difficulty of daily life, a balanced character and long experience in acquiring virtues, a basic spiritual training and knowledge, a resolute determination to suffer everything for Christ, physical difficulties accepted as a matter of course, a lack of "publicity" and a desire to be "lost to the world," the absence of any desire to "be somebody" or do such an important thing as "open a monastery," and deep humility and distrust of oneself. Those who venture on this path without at least most of these necessities: *beware!*

3. More often in recent years: a group of two or more young strugglers rediscovers the ancient traditions of monasticism and begins to struggle together, usually in the coenobitic way of life. Traditional monastic phenomena (seldom emphasized in the older monastic institutions) are spoken about and sometimes strictly followed: 'hesychasm,' 'elders,' 'confession of thoughts,' strict obedience, and the like. Special attention is paid to a conscious spiritual life, usually with frequent Holy Communion. Such groups open new monasteries or move into old monasteries and "renew" them, and often they have notable success, especially if their leader has personal "charisma"; they can be formed either of native Orthodox or largely of converts, and they generally have access to the monastic sources in one of the languages where they are most plentiful (Greek or Russian). The leader is characteristically Orthodox "by blood," not a convert, although the group as a whole may seem (especially to monks of one of the

older, "conventional" monasteries) to have definite "convert" characteristics. Such groups have a rather good chance of relative stability and outward success, but they face special dangers which should not be underemphasized. Among the chief temptations to such groups, especially if they are very successful, are: outward success can blind them to inward deficiencies, community solidarity and well-being can cause them to become inflated with a false sense of their own importance, and the appearance of "correctness" can produce spiritual smugness and disdain of those outside the group who are not so "correct". If these temptations are not overcome, a deadly "group pride" can take the place of individual pride and lead the whole community on a fatal path which none of its members can recognize because it is not his *personal* doing; the "renewed" community can become so much out of harmony with the "unrenewed" rest of the Church as to form a virtual "jurisdiction" of its own, and even end in a schism brought about by its own exaggerated feeling of "correctness." The more such groups stay out of the limelight of publicity and church disputes, and the less a point they make of emphasizing their "correctness" and their differences from the older institutions, the better chance they have for remaining spiritually sound.

In view of these contemporary monastic situations, all of them with their particular dangers and temptations, it would not be an exaggeration to state that Orthodox monasticism as a whole in the late 20th century, despite a few appearances of outward prosperity, is weak, fragile, shallow-rooted and mostly immature (at least in the sense of "under-ripe" — not yet sufficiently formed and tested). Any of the three paths that have been described (and other paths as well, for these are only generalities) *could* produce sound monastic fruits; but the probability of failure, as well as of spiritual fakery, is greater than ever before, and it would be foolish, especially for the monastic aspirant himself, not to keep this well in mind.

Monasticism, despite its other-worldly goal, is still in the world, and its state cannot but reflect the state of the world contemporary to it. The pampered, self-satisfied, self-centered young people who form the vast majority of those who come to monasticism today (at least in the free world) cannot but bring with them their worldly "baggage" of attitudes and habits, and these in turn cannot but affect the monastic environment. With a fierce and conscious battle against them, their influence can be minimized; without this constant battle, they can come to dominate even the best-organized monastery, often in hidden ways.

ORTHODOX MONASTICISM TODAY

True Orthodox monasticism by its very nature is hostile to the principle of modern *comfort.* The constant activity of the monk is not giving ease to himself, sacrificing himself, giving himself over heart and soul to something above himself; but this is exactly the opposite of the first principle of modern life, which is based on the chiliastic dream of making life easy on earth. To commit oneself to a conscious battle against the principles and habits of modern comfort is a rare and dangerous thing; and thus it is no wonder that our monasticism is so weak — it cannot but reflect the feebleness of Orthodox life in general today.

In the convert lands of the West, the earlier generation of 20th-century monastic aspirants depended much upon its own strength and its own opinions; there was little chance for it to enter into fruitful contact with genuine Orthodox monastic tradition. Numerous converts, with little or no guidance and with insufficient grounding in spiritual knowledge and monastic practice, have tried to struggle on their own (even to the extent of undertaking long fasts, praying long prayer-rules with prostrations, wearing chains, etc., or even to "open monasteries." All of these attempts have met with an almost uniform lack of success; apart from other failings, these attempts have been too personal and peculiar, too little in the tradition of Orthodoxy.

Now, however, the general atmosphere has changed; there are more monasteries, more books, more teachers, and thus Orthodox monasticism has become something more normal and less peculiar in the West. Few would now venture to try the monastic path on their own, without some kind of guidance and basic knowledge. Outwardly, at least, Orthodox monasticism is now known in the West, and all but the freshest of monastic aspirants knows that he must find a spiritual father, not undertake the monastic life (and especially "open a monastery"!) without a blessing and direction from some recognized monastic teacher, and must beware of spiritual deception. The teaching of recent Fathers of Orthodox monasticism — in particular, Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov and Bishop Theophan the Recluse — has had a sobering effect on many who might otherwise be carried away by a monastic "romanticism"; the reading of spiritual books especially addressed to the Orthodox Christians and monks of modern times *(Unseen Warfare, The Arena)* has had the effect of bringing "down to earth" those monastic aspirants who have been a little too exalted by the more advanced teachings of such Fathers as St. Isaac the Syrian and St. Simeon the New Theologian. One may see a greater balance in the monastic interest of today.

Unfortunately, the awareness of Orthodox monasticism and its ABC's remains largely, even now, an outward matter. There is still more *talk* of "elders," "hesychasm," and "prelest" than fruitful monastic struggles themselves. Indeed, it is all too possible to accept all the outward marks of the purest and most exalted monastic tradition: absolute obedience to an elder, daily confession of thoughts, long church services or individual rule of Jesus Prayer and prostrations, frequent reception of Holy Communion, reading with understanding of the basic texts of spiritual life, and in doing all this to feel a deep *psychological* peace and ease — and at the same time to remain *spiritually* immature. It is possible to cover over the untreated passions within one by means of a facade or technique of "correct" spirituality, without having true love for Christ and one's brother. The rationalism and coldness of heart of modern man in general make this perhaps the most insidious of the temptations of the monastic aspirant today. Orthodox monastic *forms,* true enough, are being planted in the West; but what about the heart of monasticism and Orthodox Christianity: repentance, humility, love for Christ our God and unquenchable thirst for His Kingdom?

In all humility let us admit the poverty of our Christianity, the coldness of our love for God, the emptiness of our spiritual pretensions; and let us use this confession as the *beginning* of our monastic path, which is a path of correction. Let us, the monks of the last times, realistically aware of our failings and of the pitfalls before us, not lose courage at the sight of them, but let us all the more strenuously offer to God our humble entreaty that He might forgive our sins and heal our wounded souls.

Orthodox monastic Gaul shows us that the monastic path is not something merely "Eastern"; rather, it is *universally Christian* and, indeed, it has been tried before in the West, and with great spiritual success. The teaching of the Orthodox monastic Fathers of East and West is one and the same, and it offers nothing less — for those with ears to hear it — than the shortest path to Christ's Kingdom.

Again, the Orthodox monasticism of Gaul is always close to its roots and aware of its aim, never bogged down in the letter of its disciplines and forms. Its freshness and directness are a source of great inspiration even today.

Finally, Orthodox monastic Gaul reveals to us how close true monasticism is to the Gospel. St. Gregory's *Life of the Fathers* is particularly insistent on this point: each of the Lives begins with the Gospel, and each saint's deeds flow

from it as their source. No matter what he describes in Orthodox Gaul — whether the painting of icons, the undertaking of ascetic labors, the veneration of a saint's relics — all is done *for the love of Christ,* and this is never forgotten.

The monastic life, indeed, even in our times of feeble faith, is still above all *the love of Christ,* the Christian life par excellence, experienced with many patient sufferings and much pain. Even today there are those who penetrate the secret of this paradise on earth — more often through humble sufferings than through outward "correctness" — a paradise which worldly people can scarcely imagine. May this book help increase their number and fill all with a greater love of God Who is truly glorified in His saints.

Matushka Maria of Gatchina

BY I. M. ANDREYEV

The following is one of the several moving accounts wherein Prof. Andreyev describes his personal contact with Russia's new saints and martyrs.

SOME THIRTY MILES from Petrograd there is the small town of Gatchina, well known to all residents of Petrograd for its gardens, parks and palaces. In this town there lived before the Revolution a nun, Maria, who was known not only by the residents of Gatchina, but by many residents of Petrograd as well. The Revolution of 1917 found Matushka Maria on her sick bed. After suffering encephalitis (inflamation of the brain), she entered the condition of the so-called Parkinson's Disease (named after the physician Parkinson who described this condition): her whole body became as it were chained and immovable, her face anemic and like a mask; she could speak, but she began to talk with half-closed mouth, through her teeth, pronouncing slowly and in a monotone. She was a total invalid and was in constant need of help and careful looking after. Usually this disease proceeds with sharp psychological changes (irritability, a tiresome stubbornness in repeating stereotyped questions, an exaggerated egoism and egocentrism, manifestations of senility, and the like), as a result of which such patients often ended up in psychiatric hospitals. But Mother Maria, being a total physical invalid, not only did not degenerate psychically, but revealed completely extraordinary features of personality and character, not characteristic of such patients: she became extremely meek, humble, submissive, undemanding, concentrated in herself; she became engrossed in constant prayer, bearing her difficult condition without the least murmuring. As if as a reward for this humility and patience, the Lord sent her a gift: *consolation of the sorrowing*. Completely strange and unknown people, finding themselves in

sorrows, grief, depression, and despondency, began to visit her and converse with her. And everyone who came to her left consoled, feeling an illumination of their grief, a pacifying of sorrow, a calming of fears, a taking away of depression and despondency. The news of this extraordinary nun gradually spread far beyond the boundaries of the city of Gatchina.

Matushka Maria lived in a little wooden house at the outskirts of the city, where I visited her in March, 1927. While waiting to be received, I examined the numerous photographs in the reception room and noticed two: Metropolitan Benjamin (of Petrograd, the New Martyr) and Metropolitan Joseph (soon to become leader of the "Josephite" movement). Metropolitan Joseph on his photograph had written a touching dedication to Matushka Maria, quoting a large selection from his work *In the Father's Embrace,* while Metropolitan Benjamin had written briefly: "To the deeply-respected sufferer Matushka Maria, who, among many grieving ones, has consoled also me, a sinner. . ."

I had the great good fortune to be present at the manifestation of miracles of healing of grieving souls. A young man, who had grown despondent after the arrest and exile of his priest-father, left Matushka with a joyful smile, having resolved to accept the rank of deacon. A young woman, who was grieving, became radiantly joyful, similarly resolving to become a nun. An elderly man who was suffering deeply over the death of his son left Matushka upright and encouraged. An elderly woman, who had come with tears, left calm and firm.

When I went in to her, I told Matushka Maria that a terrible depression often attacked me, sometimes lasting for several weeks, and that I could find no way to get rid of it.

"Depression is a spiritual cross," she told me; "it is sent to help the penitent who do not know how to repent, that is, who after repentance fall again into the earlier sins. . . And therefore, only two medicines can treat this sometimes extremely difficult suffering of soul. One must either learn to repent and offer the fruits of repentance; or else bear this spiritual cross, one's depression, with humility, meekness, patience, and great gratitude to the Lord, remembering that the bearing of this cross is accounted by the Lord as the fruit of repentance. . . And afer all, what a great consolation it is to realize that your discouragement is the unacknowleded fruit of repentance, an unconscious self-chastisement for the absence of the fruits that are demanded. . . From this thought one should come to contrition, and then the depression gradually melts and the true fruits of repentance will be conceived. . ."

From these words of Matushka Maria it was as if someone had literally made an operation on my soul and removed a spiritual tumor. . .And I left a different man.

About 1930 Matushka Maria was arrested. She was accused of counter-revolutionary propaganda and of participating in a counter-revolutionary organization, according to paragraphs 10 and 11 of Article 58 (of the Soviet criminal code). Her brother also was arrested. The "organization" was composed of only two people. And the "propaganda" against Communism was her gift of consolation in sorrows. Those who were present during the arrest describe a frightful picture of mockery and cruel violence upon the patient sufferer who was paralyzed and incapable of any physical movement. The "politico-religious crime" of Matushka Maria was deepened by her refusal to recognize Metropolitan Sergius after his famous Declaration of 1927, which led to a schism in the Russian Church.

The poor sufferer was dragged by her arms, which were twisted behind her back, along the floor and ground from her bed to the truck by two Chekists . . . Swinging her much-suffering, paralyzed body, the Chekists threw it into the truck and took her away. Her brother was taken away in another automobile, a so-called "black raven" (a black limousine used especially for transporting the victims of arrests made in the deep of night; described by Solzhenitzen in volume one of *The Gulag Archipelago).* The compassionate venerators of Matushka Maria began to bring modest parcels to her in prison. These were accepted for a month. And then, once, they did not accept the parcels and said briefly, "She died in the hospital." (Such helpless patients were usually killed.) The body was not given over.

Her brother, a weak, small, refined gentleman, who had looked after her with self-sacrifice and received visitors, after nine months of investigation received five years imprisonment in a Siberian concentration camp.

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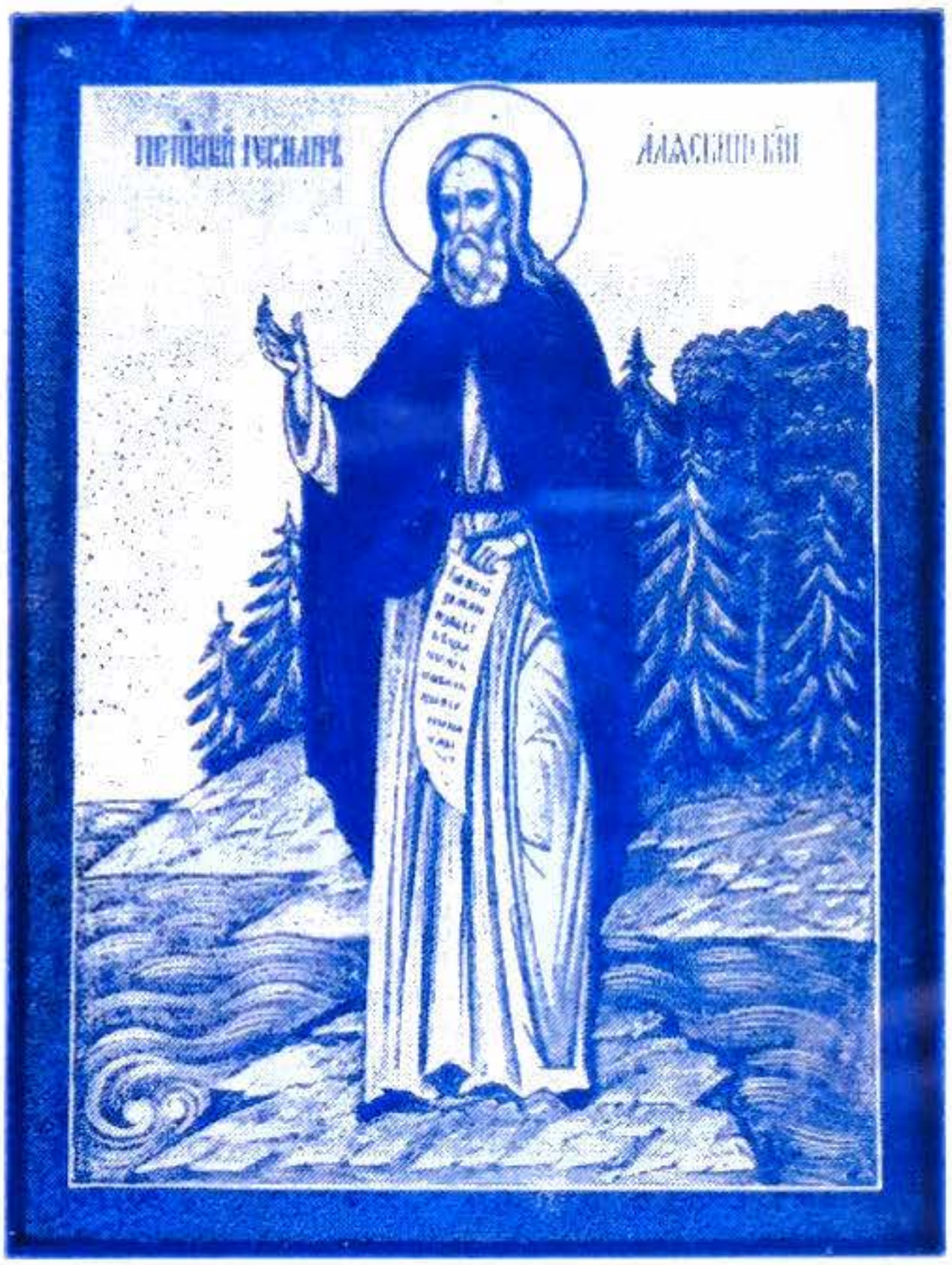

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